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Vol. 1. No. 3. 50p

# STARBURST

**CLOSE ENCOUNTERS**  
-behind the scenes

**STAR WARS**

-Han Solo speaks

**STAR TREK**

-latest film news

**LOGAN'S RUN**

**SUPERMAN**

-the movie

History of  
**CINEMA SF**





SUPERMAN the feature film-see page 24

# STARBURST



**W**elcome to the third colour-packed issue of *Starburst* in which we've somehow managed to cram almost as much material as our first two issues put together!

As promised last time around, we take the lid off *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, the staggering new sf film from Columbia Pictures. And who better to do the job than two of the top sf cinema historians: John Baxter (author of *Science Fiction in the Cinema*) reviews the film, while John Brosnan (author of *Movie Magic*, who took us behind the scenes of *Star Wars* in issue 1) takes a look at the visual and photographic effects.

In answer to many letters asking us to cover more classic sf movies, we've also persuaded John Brosnan to write a lead-in feature to such a series on the growth and development of screen sci-fi.

Already written, for the next few issues, we've in-depth articles on *Dark Star*, *War of the Worlds* and *Silent Running*.

We also take the lid off several upcoming projects this issue: *Superman*, *Star Trek* and *Quark*, as well as an analysis of the failure of tv's *Logan's Run*.

Harrison Ford is our latest *Star Wars* actor to be interviewed, with, next issue... Darth Vader (Dave Prowse). Other interviews lined up for future months in our ever-growing files include effects expert Doug Trumbull, Steven Spielberg, John Dykstra and *Dark Star* creator John Carpenter.

The mammoth amount of material we had for this issue has forced back our promised *Twilight Zone* feature, and our total comic strip section (more details on the latter in our new letters from the readers column on page 30).

Somehow, we have managed to squeeze in the first of our book review columns this time, though. And next issue we will be extending it to include sf music, by way of the growing industry of movie soundtracks.

Hope you enjoy this issue as much as we did getting the material together.

*Dez Skinn*

Editor: Dez Skinn Art Editor: Nigel Money

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# CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

## OF THE THIRD KIND

There is a brilliant appropriateness to the advertising design for *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*: a stretch of two-lane blacktop highway, that most characteristic feature of the American rural landscape, points at the horizon where an indeterminate glow lights up the night sky. One feels oneself accelerating instinctively towards the light, victims of the emotion most characteristic of this film—curiosity.

Audiences hoping for the electronic razzle-dazzle of *Star Wars* will find *Close Encounters* a puzzling, even frustrating experience. Special effects it has in abundance, and some ingenious mechanical effects as well, arguably better than those achieved photographically, but human rather than technical skill dominates the production, and, for once, acting and background play a more important part

than the wizardry of the laboratory. Like the films of Jack Arnold, with which *Close Encounters* has many attitudes and themes in common, it looks for the unknown and the inexplicable in the apparently mundane activities of our own lives and finds its heroes in society's oddballs and drop-outs.

*Close Encounters* begins in that most familiar of sf movie settings, the desert.

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Review by John Baxter

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Cars loom out of a sandstorm and a group of muffled men led by a frenetic Frenchman quiz baffled Mexican border guards about the World War Two fighter planes standing abandoned and alone in the red haze. Sliding back the canopies, they push aside Forties memorabilia—pin-ups, calendars, snaps of the folks—to tap gauges that register full loads of fuel, test switches con-

nected to charged batteries. Only as the engines start up explosively does one of the group reveal to a puzzled interpreter that these planes disappeared more than thirty years ago on a training flight with all their crews. The *frisson* is superbly contrived, without any special effect more complex than a vivid cinematic imagination.

Spielberg may not be offering a homage to American masters of fifties' fantasy film but there is far more of George Pal, Jack Arnold and Walt Disney in this film than George Lucas and Stanley Kubrick. Even had he not decided to end with a long reprise of *When You Wish Upon a Star* from *Pinochio* to accompany the starship drifting into space with his hero on board, Spielberg's intentions to spin a fantasy of wish-fulfilment rather than challenge the worth of such dreams would have been obvious throughout;



Facing page: The imposing "Mother Ship" descends over Devil's Tower, while, above Roy Neary (Richard Dreyfuss) looks on from his place of hiding.



although the song was removed at the last minute it is still in his novelisation of the screenplay, and its implication remains. A wind-up model of Pinocchio and Jimminy Cricket turns up earlier in the film, along with scores of other toys, tools of imagination for both Richard Dreyfuss and four-year-old Cary Guffey, two fantasists separated by age but joined by a common delight in the possibilities of an encounter with alien life.

Everywhere Spielberg contrasts the most common reaction to this possibility — blind terror — with the enthusiasm of those few outsiders who can encompass its potential. In a superb scene, marked by the vivid mechanical effects that are such a feature of the film, aliens swoop down from a sky boiling with clouds to kidnap the child from his mother. As she cowers with him inside their isolated farmhouse mysterious lights glare outside, the house's electrical appliances go mad, and the fastenings on the air-conditioning vents begin to unscrew themselves. Melinda Dillon as the desperate mother screams like a horror movie heroine but the boy laughs with delight—can hardly wait, in fact, to be reunited with his friends, the space children.

Equally motivated by fear, the authorities, on discovering the aliens' landing point, throw a cordon around it and put out a story of escaping nerve gas to clear everyone from the area, even the handful of enthusiasts personally invited by the star people to attend. Against this institutional terror and xenophobia Spielberg sets the fascination of Dreyfuss and his friends



with the new and unusual, even accepting its more bizarre aspect when, at a press conference called by the Air Force to put down rumours of flying saucers over Indiana, the calm, intelligent and far from hostile pronouncements of official spokesmen are met, not with rational arguments, but by a gruff claim from one grizzled believer that he has seen not only flying saucers but the legendary monster Big Foot as well. We all flinch, Dreyfuss included, but Spielberg's message sticks—if UFOs exist, why not Big Foot, and the Loch Ness monster as well?

In the original script Dreyfuss hammers this point home by fiddling with the lighting equipment of the skyscraper in which the conference

takes place so that its windows spell out the letters "U F O", a moment of excess sensibly removed from the final version. Equally, other incidents might have been cut to the improvement of the film. **Close Encounters** sags noticeably between the twin set-pieces of the first contact with the aliens and the spectacular confrontation between star men and earthlings at Devil's Tower, an unusual rock formation in Wyoming nominated by the visitors as a meeting place. Between these incidents we are left with the basic passing of every sf film—official disbelief, personal tensions among the searchers, some gratuitous action. From time to time Dreyfuss pulls it together with acting skill, accurately detailing an already mercurial individual in the grip of an obsession. But for all the aptness of the sequence when he wrecks his home and that of his neighbours to build in his living room a model of the pinnacle he sees in his mind, it is basically low comedy that Spielberg gives us, compatible with the sequences in fifties' sf films where the comic lab technician loses his cool in zero-gravity or gets drunk on alcohol synthesised by Robby the Robot.

Yet it picks up superbly again at the close, a long sequence made arguably more powerful by our lack of preparation. Throughout the film, Spielberg seldom spells out the nature of the aliens nor the way earth proposes to communicate with them. Only at the end, on the specialized landing strip and communications centre known as The Dark Side of the Moon is it made





clear that imagination and art will give us the necessary vocabulary. In the film's most exhilarating moments, a single technician at a console plays a message in sound and vision with the help of five men — programmers? composers?—at his side. When the computer analyses the alien language reply to the five chords and takes control, colour panel and amplifiers explode in a fugue in which the gigantic spaceship gleefully joins. London theatres whose speaker systems blew out under the strain of *Star Wars*' bass notes will find this a severe test, but audiences may well applaud as did those in New York at Frank Warner's superb sound engineering.

Most of *Close Encounters*' many technical coups stem, like the sound track, from traditional techniques rather than new departures, and for this reason devotees of photographic effects may find the film slightly deficient in surprises, special effects chief Douglas Trumbull preferring to conceal his art rather than flourish it a la John Dykstra. The absolute naturalism of the clouds that precede the arrival of the space ships obscures the intricate effects by which they are obtained. (See our special *Close Encounters—Behind the Scenes* feature at the back of this issue for details.)

The attraction, and finally the triumph of *Close Encounters* is that it deals less with technology than with people—and conventional people at that. Again and again Spielberg confronts us with the realities of home life, public order, the living and dying against which the



*Above left: Before an astonished world, the mammoth alien craft quietly descends. Bottom, left facing page: While his wife (Terri Garr) looks on dismayed, Roy Neary (Richard Dreyfuss) almost fanatically argues over his own encounter with extra-terrestrials. Above: Even when shaving, Neary is obsessed with a strange shape . . . the outline of Devil's Tower, where he will eventually journey to meet the alien beings. Below: Show-stealer Carl Guffy, a four-year old boy who meets the aliens and is taken aboard their ship.*



impact of this meeting with alien life must be measured. Not everyone will enjoy that first contact. To some, like Dreyfuss's wife, superbly played by Teri Garr, it is an insupportable infringement of her role as wife and mother. After taking calmly her husband's demand that she and the children accompany him to a distant hillside in the hope of seeing the UFOs for a second time, she tries to laugh off the trip as a romantic excursion, then remarks conversationally, "I think I'm taking this very well, don't you?" Finally, however, she loads the kids into the car and leaves for her sister's house, another victim of Dreyfuss's overwhelming need to know—a need not everyone shares.

In an interview in January's *American Cinematographer* Spielberg has underlined the importance of the film's conventional social background. "The audience must never lose its terrestrial identity," he says. "This isn't a science fiction movie. It's about what people believe is really happening. Fifty-three percent of the American people believe that UFOs are visiting us—that we are under some sort of close scrutiny and have been for many, many years. The other half of the population doesn't. But it was important for me that I root



**Above:** Unable to sleep, Roy Neary risks losing his wife, family and job, as he continues to unravel the mystery around Devil's Tower, and its connection with the alien visitors. **Below:** Top French director Francois Truffaut has the same obsession as Dreyfuss in the film, but approaches it in a cool, controlled fashion as a leading French expert on extra-terrestrials, called in by the American government to unravel the mystery.

this film in a sort of common reality."

Spielberg probably overstates the case when he disassociates *Close Encounters* from science fiction, though it is certainly worlds removed from the

technological fantasy of *Star Wars*. Most important is its decision to discard the conventional heroics of sf film and replace them with a cast of characters less sure, gripped by their obsession but doubting it as well. Most science fiction, both in literature and the cinema, deals with an elite, and this film is no exception, but in showing that elite as obsessed and imperfect, an irritant to its fellows and a threat to social order—however right and inevitable its aims—Spielberg's film builds some useful bridges. It also turns it from a very good film to a great one.



#### Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1978)

**Cast:** Richard Dreyfuss (as Roy Neary), Francois Truffaut (Claude Lacombe), Teri Garr (Ronnie Neary), Melinda Dillon (Julian Guiler), Bob Balaban (David Laughlin), Lance Hendriksen (Robert), Warren Kemmerling (Wild Bill), Roberts Blossom (the farmer), Phillip Dodds (Jean Claude), Cary Guffey (Barry Guiler), Shawn Bishop (Brad Neary), Adrien Campbell (Silvia Neary), Justin Dreyfuss (Toby Neary), Merrill Connally (Team Leader), George Dicenzo (Major Benchley).  
**Produced by** Julia Phillips and Michael Phillips. **Written and directed by** Steven Spielberg. **Director of photography** Vilmos Zsuzsanna. **Special Photographic Effects by** Douglas Trumbull. **Music by** John Williams. **Production Designer:** John Alves. **Edited by** Michael Kahn. **Visual Effect Concepts by** Steven Spielberg. **Technical Adviser** Dr. J. Allen Hynek. **Art Director** Dan Lomino. **Matte Artist** Matthew Yurklich.  
**Running time:** 135 mins **Certificate:** A



We are not alone

# CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

OF THE THIRD KIND<sup>A</sup>

A COLUMBIA/EMI Presentation

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND A PHILLIPS Production A STEVEN SPIELBERG Film

Starring RICHARD DREYFUSS also starring TERI GARR and MELINDA DILLON with FRANCOIS TRUFFAUT as Lacombe

Music by JOHN WILLIAMS Visual Effects by DOUGLAS TRUMBULL Director of Photography VILMOS ZSIGMOND A.S.C.

Produced by JULIA PHILLIPS and MICHAEL PHILLIPS Written and Directed by STEVEN SPIELBERG

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# S...TO...COME.....THINGS...T

Compiled by Tony Crawley



With Dave Allen handling the effects, Charles Band Productions give us **Laserblast**. A full feature on this upcoming sf movie will appear next issue.

## Alien Titles

Two films with the same name? Hot on the news that Peter Sellers will, at long last, be making **The Alien** in India for director Satyajit Ray, comes the splendid British news that 20th Century Fox are backing "a thriller-horror film set in space" called... **Alien**.

Shooting begins in June at Shepperton studios, with Turkish locations back-up. What had got us so high about the venture is that the director will be former BBC art director, designer and eventual tv director, Ridley Scott, who made such an impressive cinema debut with **The Duellists**.

"Screen sci-fi," says Scott, "whether expensive or cheapjack, will soon be as common and as hackneyed as the western. I decided I wanted to get in sooner rather than later. We'll be keeping away from comic book fantasy—more just the other side of probability, involving speculation based on solid fact, and considerably simpler than **Close Encounters**."

The movie will cost around \$5,000,000, which Fox can more than afford what with **Star Wars**, **Julia**, **The Turning Point**, **High Anxiety** and two new Brian De Palma films to come. Everything Fox touches is currently turning to gold.

The story in brief: a space cruiser menaced by a stowaway interstellar monster. Sounds familiar? Well... the script is by two other directors, Walter Hill and David Giler. But like most of today's sf ventures, it was first announced some time ago—when Walter Hill was due to direct what was then described as a script by Dan O'Bannon... John Carpenter's partner in the magical **Dark Star** exercise.

## Conan the Barbarian

**Star Trek** seems to have set a trend for indecision. Hollywood's other great on-off project is also back again—and also at **Star Trek**'s home base, Paramount. This is the much discussed screen version of **Conan**—originally to be made by writer-director John Milius, another member of George Lucas' University of Southern California group. Well, Milius is out of it. Paramount have rescured the venture with a bankroll of up to \$15,000,000. Ed Pressman is producing; Oliver Stone tackles the script, based on the Robert E. Howard books. The satr alone remains the same... Mr. Muscles, Arnold Schwarzenegger. But which director is tough enough to tell him what to do?

## SF Awards

We tend not to run reports of prize-giving in the film world. There are too many, most of them completely unimportant, chasing headlines for their society, town or even country. Once in a while, an award night of major

# ...COME.....THINGS...TO...

interest takes place, though. Such as the fifth annual Science Fiction Film Awards, sponsored by Hollywood's Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror—hosted by William Shatner and Karen Black at the Coconut Grove, earlier this year.

The winners were, in filmland jargon, a shoo-in. George Lucas's *Star Wars* snatched eight of the trophies, although having to share two of them with Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*: Best Director and Best Music (John Williams).

John Dykstra and Elstree's John Stears won best special effects; Rick Baker, Stuart Freeborn, make-up; John Mollo, costumes; Lucas, script; Sir Alec Guinness, best supporting actor; and of course, the film itself won best science fiction film. Not a bad haul.

## Cult Cartoon

Will you welcome please, Messrs. Lucas and Spielberg—cartoon buffs.

When George first showed *Star Wars* to his cast and crew in Hollywood early last year, he opened his special screening with an old Warner Brothers cartoon favourite of his, *Duck Dodgers of the 24th Century*.

A full year later, Lucas finally got his way in one San Francisco cinema. And now the animated adventures of Daffy Duck and Porky Pig against Martin the Martian on Planet X are supporting *Star Wars* in every show . . .

An guess what appears in *Close Encounters*? When Richard Dreyfuss wakes up in his playroom and his son is watching TV cartoons? *Duck Dodgers* rides again . . . with Porky Pig handing a bomb to Martin the Martian saying "H'h'h' happy birthday, you thing from another world, you".

Last time any of the cartoon was seen was in a CBS TV's *Bugs Bunny in Space* show. Now thanks to the memories of George and Steve, *Duck Dodgers* (directed by Charles M. "Chuck" Jones from a Michael Maltese story, with voices by Mal Blanc of course) seems destined to become a cult cartoon classic.

## Poster Wars

Lucas & Spielberg, part two . . . The *Star Wars* and *CE3K* battle is not merely confined to the world cinemas. It's also raging in the poster world.

A combine called Image Factory has been selling 1,500,000 *Star Wars* poster a month since May 1977, occasionally dropping to a mere million. Great news. If nothing else it buries once and for all the fatuous suggestion that the best-selling poster of all time is the 12,000,000 sold of the blowout hair end face of Farrah Fawcett Majors.

Except that another firm called Thought Factory think bigger. They project a monthly sale of up to 2,500,000 of the *Close Encounters* poster, making Spielberg the all-

time poster winner. Which is well, rather surprising. It's a good poster. But not *that* good.

## Sequel Kings

All the 1978 features from the hit production team of Richard Zanuck and David Brown fall into the sequel category—or old films dusted down and given new life. Apart from *Jaws II*, their *Gene With The Wind* continuation and their ideas about a new *Sting* flick, Zanuck-Brown are into a new version of *When Worlds Collide*. Anthony Burgess, the *Clockwork Orange* author, has re-modelled the story and

Stirling Silliphant (*The Towering Inferno*, etc.) is writing the script for autumn shooting. The 1951 original, produced by Garo Gal, was penned by Sydney Boehm from the novel by Edwin Balmer and Philip Wyle.

## Warning

Michael F. Goldman, president of Hollywood's independent firm, Manson International, who must have cheek running anything named Manson in Hollywood, also has commonsense where the so-called sf boom is concerned. "There will be a saturation during 1978," he says, "and the theme should fall out of favour



A more down-to-earth sf thriller is due to be released late 1978. From Scotia-American Productions of New York, *Skywatch*.

# ME.....THINGS...TO...COME

towards the end of the year. I do not believe that run-of-the-mill science fiction features available for release after the end of 1978 will have the same kind of value as those released early in the year, with the exception of the very high budget, high quality features usually from major companies."

What chance for his firm's *Laserblast*, in other words?

## Damnation Alley

The slowly disappearing film, *Damnation Alley*, lives. Just about. And the above Goldman point of view seems to be one reason why. Having crissed and crossed through various name changes from *Survival Run* back to the original, apparently because George Peppard preferred it, the film is being delayed by 20th Century Fox for a big autumn launching in Britain.

Subject: A bunch of survivors from a thermonuclear war, arise from their underground base to check what's happening with the world. Sounds like Logan's Silent *Survival Run*. As well as George Peppard, the film features Jan-Michael Vincent and French lovely, Dominique Sanda. Director: Jack Smight. Promise: Natura gone mad. Promise: Not a lot!

While we still wait for the release of *Superman*, there is a little movie going around the States called, would you believe it, *Hong Kong Superman*. More on that one next issue.

## New Tarzans

The "definitive" Tarzan movie is to be shot this year. Greystoke is the title, written by Jack Nicholson and Warren Beatty's favourite writer, Robert Towne.

Plus we've heard that an ex-Tarz, Denny Miller, has turned modern jungle hero for a new TV series, *Kasper of the Wild*. Sounds like a kind of *Daktari Meets Born Free*.

## Peppery Bands

It doesn't have to be sf with robots... Robert Stigwood's \$12,000,000 rock musical *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, based on you-know-who's songbook, comes complete with Peter Frampton, Bee Gees, Paul Nicholas, George Burns, Donald Pleasance, Frankie Howard and a who's-who of pop idols for the climax... Plus two female robots and a laser-beam fight!

They'll need such frills. Rock is out and orchestras are in in the States, where young audiences are eagerly buying tickets for symphony orchestra concerts of the John William's *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters* scores more than for any rock group. The L.S.O. is selling better than the E.L.O.! Another biggie on the new young concert plat-

form scene is Kubrick's hotch-potch of classics from 2001. *Star Trek* skipper William Shatner, suddenly into a new career of narrating such concerts, says his dates win "staggering" audiences of up to 17,000 fans at a time.

## CE3K(2)!

Steven Spielberg, who may or may not make one of the *Star Wars* sequels, is definitely planning a *Close Encounters 2*. So far he's the only movie-maker to have booked space on the NASA space shuttle. He's not going but a camera is—to get some shots of the real world for the new movie. Wall, Doug Trumbull can't fake everything...

## Italian Style

Italy is never far behind any cinematic boom. Be warned, though. Roman ripoffs are shodder than most. The Nais combine seems the first to jump aboard the current sf bandwagon—with both left feet. Having finished *Year 3000*, *The White Death*, they're now heavily into *Stratostar*—the Italian title being rather more to the point: *War of the Robots*. A fetching young lady called Yanti Sommer is in both films.

Also due out from Rome: Terence Hathaway's *Argomen—The Fantastic Superman*. A gent called Roger Browne (as obvious a pseudonym as director Hathaway's) plays the title role, in what appears to be Buster Crabbe's hand-me-down long-johns from his *Flash Gordon* days. And, talking about Italians and America's answer to Dan Dare...

## Snippets

Did you know that...

Top sf actor Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., makes his screen acting debut in New York's *Memories* opposite Susannah York, who recently played *Superman's* mother. \*\*\*Harrison Ford says all three mainstays—Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher and himself—will star in *Star Wars 2*. \*\*\*Mark Hamill says *Star Wars 2* will open in America May 25, 1980—by which time he'll be talking about *Star Wars 3*, the last he's signed for.

## Galactic Top Twenty

With *Star Wars* finally overhauling *Jaws* and every other box-office champion, to become, unimpeachably, the most successful film ever made, this naturally means the George Lucas film is the most successful sf movie of all time.

How then do the other classics rate?

Variety's annual list of all-time box-office champions supplies the answer. The figures below represent rentals paid to distributors (not box-office receipts), and in the American-Canadian market alone. Simply double the

take for a close approximation of global figures. To be computerised by *Variety*, films must have earned rentals of \$4,000,000 at least. Finally, we've attempted to restrict our list to sf/fantasy in its purest form. Hence no *Towering Airports*, *King Kong*, *Poseidon* or *007*.

1. *Star Wars* (George Lucas; 1977) \$127,000,000
2. 2001: A Space Odyssey (Stanley Kubrick; 1968) \$24,000,000
3. *Close Encounters of Third Kind* (Steven Spielberg; 1977) \$23,000,000+
4. *Planet of the Apes* (Franklin Schaffner; 1968) \$15,000,000
5. *Logan's Run* (Michael Anderson; 1976) \$9,500,000
6. *Rollerball* (Norman Jewison; 1975) \$8,800,000
7. *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* (Ted Post; 1970) \$8,600,000
8. *The Andromeda Strain* (Robert Wise; 1971) \$8,341,000
9. *Sleeper* (Woody Allen; 1973) \$7,875,000
10. *Westworld* (Michael Crichton; 1973) \$7,000,000
11. *Escape from Planet of the Apes* (Don Taylor; 1971) \$5,560,000
12. *Fantastic Voyage* (Richard Fleischer; 1966) \$5,500,000
13. *Barbarella* (Roger Vadim; 1968) \$5,500,000
14. *Damnation Alley* (Jack Smight; 1977) \$5,500,000
15. *Death Race 2000* (Paul Bartel; 1975) \$5,250,000
16. *Futuraworld* (Richard T. Haefron; 1976) \$5,000,000
17. *Conquest of Planet of the Apes* (J. Lee Thompson; 1972) \$4,500,000
18. *Marooned* (John Sturges; 1969) \$4,350,000
19. *Battle for Planet of the Apes* (J. Lee Thompson; 1973) \$4,027,000
20. *The Omega Man* (Boris Sagal; 1971) \$4,000,000

Statistics note: *Star Wars* has earned more money than the next ten films in the list. In fact, the 19 other films listed have together earned only \$35,000,000 more than the Lucas film... and it hasn't stopped yet.

\*A late 1977 release. Possible contender for No. 1 position.

## Convention Calender

Starting next issue, we'll be printing a list of all the upcoming conventions in the British Isles. This service is totally free to all convention organisers, so if you're planning a gathering during 1978, send us the details stating where, when, how much, special guests (if any), registration fee, and anything else you think relevant. This calender will cover conventions



# .....THINGS TO COME.....

on all fantasy-related topics: films, comics, horror, sf, Star Trek, Spce 1999, Star Wars, etc. But remember, *conventions only*. Not fan clubs or fanzines.

## TV NEWS

### Matheson Chronicles

After some five years of what NBC tends to call "development"—a euphemism for waiting for the right moment (i.e., the right movie to rip-off) — Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* is finally destined for the box. Six hours of it begins shooting in May.

The good news is that Richard Matheson—who else?—has scripted the mammoth enterprise. The not-so-hot news is that one half of the co-production parties involved is Charles Fries Productions, which made the tongue-in-cheek *Spiderman* (reviewed in *Starburst* 2).

The full saga of trying to film Bradbury's *Chronicles* is now around an astonishing *twenty* years old. As far back as 1957, Kirk Douglas' Byrne Productions took an option on the book with a tv series in mind. Three years later, MGM pick up what Kirk dropped and announced a movie.

In 1964, director Robert Mulligen was in London and telling me, rather excitedly for such a cool man, that *Chronicles* would be his next project! The last time we heard mention of anything "definite" about the project, the tv and film (and documentary) producer, David Wolper, was setting up another tv version. Wolper had Bradbury write the script himself; the author being restricted to a three hour adaptation. Now, R. Matheson has the green light for a full six-hour miniseries. So let's hope nothing stops it this time around.

Richard Matheson, of course, is the obvious scribe for such a venture. At 52, he is the best fantasy writer in America, covering everything from classic (and TV) science fiction to the best of Roger Corman's Edgar Allan Poe series. He started in movies with *The Incredible Shrinking Man* in the very year that Kirk Douglas was tub-thumping his TV *Chronicles*: 1957.

Matheson's Corman movies include *The Fall of House of Usher*, *The Pit and the Pendulum*, *Master of the World*, *Tales of Terror* and the memorable version of *The Raven* (1960-1963). In Britain, Matheson provided scripts for Sidney Hayer's *Night of the Eagle* (1962), Silvio Norezzano's *Fanatic* (1965), Tarence Fisher's *The Devil Rides Out* (1968) and Johnny Hough's superb *Legend of Hell House* (1973).

Several of his own stories have been filmed as well, including *I Am Legend* twice over—with Vincent Price in the US/Italian version,



Sight unseen in Britain, aired September 10th 1977 in the States as part of *The Krofft Supershow* "77"—ABC's 60 minute "Bigfoot & Wild Boy", starring Joe Butcher (as Wild Boy) and Ray Young. Perhaps Chewbacca isn't quite so alien after all!



# THINGS...TO...COME.....THINGS



CBS enter the space race with their 30 minute series *Ark II*. Again, unseen in Britain, the US pilot episode starring Terry Lester (pictured above) was screened last September.

**The Last Man On Earth** (1964) and Boris Sagal's much better treatment, with Charlton Heston as *The Omega Men* (1971). In fact, Matheson has been around so long, he's about to see his debut re-vamped as *The Incredible Shrinking Woman*—for pea-size Grant Williams now read Lily (Late Show) Tomlin, which sounds like fun.

As to Matheson's TV credits—they'd fill

this page, and a few to come. He supplied probably more stories than he can remember to Rod Sterling's *Twilight Zone* and *Night Gallery*—and *Star Trek* would not have been *Star Trek* without him, that's for sure. By the mid-70s he tied up with horror-director Dan Curtis for various *Night Stalker* tales and his treatment of Stoker's *Dracula*—which starred Jack Palance.

On top of this formidable list, we should not forget the script of his own story, *Dual*, the first movie (elbeit TV-movie in America and a cultish sleeper in Euro-cinemas) to have been directed by young Steven Spielberg.

## Galactica

Hot news from USA-TV: a new ABC series called *Galactica*. Very much under wraps for now. Except to say that the *Star Wars* magician, John Dykstre is in charge of the special effects. So far, ABC-TV has ordered one three-hour film, with two two-hour stories to follow. Then if all goes well, it'll make series form ... which could be the end of it!

## Stepping Beyond

Another good thing coming out of the *Star Wars/Closa Encounters* big profits situation is the return after seventeen years of tv's *One Step Beyond*. Or as it is now called: *The Next Step Beyond*. Little else but the title has been altered. John Newland is still the host and director; Collier Young, executive producer; and creator Merwin Gerard remains writer and associate producer. The names and faces are the same, simply nineteen years older. The series began in 1959 and ran through 94 half-hour shows (all directed by Newland) until 1981; that's 57 shows and three years less than the similar, and some say more popular, *Twilight Zone*.

Where *Zone* dealt with fiction, *Beyond* was and remains a completely factual show, based on all manner of stranger-than-fiction reportage about ESP, UFOs, the supernatural, ghosts and other inexplicable phenomena.

So far the worst thing about the new series—apart from Newland continuing to insist on directing everything (he makes a slightly better host than director)—is that it's being aimed at what American television refers to as prime-access slotting. This is the mid-afternoon soap-opera and game-shows time, instead of the wee small hours of the morning, when the stories' inherent creepiness works superbly on the viewer's subconscious (particularly if viewing it alone).

Even so, the new series is already a big winner, grabbing the number one spot for its time period in both New York and Los Angeles. US housewives aren't *that* dumb, apparently. First of the new shows—*Tsunami*—covered an amazing real life happening in California's Crescent City a few years ago. An invalid woman thrown from her wheel-chair at her beach-house in the midst of a tidal wave—is saved by the inexplicable perception of a 12-year-old autistic child living three miles away. The kid called the police to the rescue ... the first time the child had spoken in years.

A good enough beginning, typical of the old series. Except, of course, that the old series

# INGS...TO...COME.....



NBC's early entry into the science-fiction wave came in the shape of a 30 minute Saturday morning slot animated series, *The Young Sentinels*. The title stars being a trio of superheroes from space who return to Earth with legendary powers to fight evil around the world. From left to right: Mercury, Astraea and Hercules.

is now pure nostalgia and is remembered as being far better than it ever was. Which makes life tough on the old team getting it on again. Even so, the original shows had their moments. They featured a whole bunch of actors then new to TV, names as diverse as Brando's sister, Jocelyn, to Patrick MacNee, Cloris Leachman, Patrick O'Neal, Louise Fletcher, Ralph Nelson (since turned director), Grant Williams (Metheson's *Incredible Shrinking Man*), Joan Fontaine, William Shatner, Elizabeth Montgomery (later *Bewitched*) and even Warren Beatty... in a grey wig. Newland and team even came to London to shoot the last of the series, making use of such obvious players as Peter Wyngarde, Anton Diffring, Donald Pleasance, Graham Stark (?) and, naturally... Christopher Lee.

If they get their act together again in similar style, add a bit more to their budgeting (the pilot show rather overdid the stock footage) and above all, if Newland—like Rod Serling on

*Twilight Zone* and *Night Gallery*—let a few other directors have a crack at the stories, *The Next Step Beyond* could be a real winner, all over again. And why not? Stranger things have happened in the show.

## Riddle~me~Pee

The Riddler lives... I Frank Gorshin, the actor-impressionist, forever fondly remembered for his lively scampering as Riddler in the old *Batman* TV series, is among the latest crop of guest-stars tackling Lynda Carter in *The New Adventures of Wonder Woman*.

Incidentally, the series has lately been updated from the original World War II years to the present day, which means Lynda's Diane Prince is still special assistant to Lyle Waggoner—except he's now playing his own son, the offspring of his character in the earlier shows... if you see what *they* mean.

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## Special Preview

*"When I heard that Buck Henry had written a television pilot script, I figured it would be good. But when I read the script and found it so incredibly funny and containing such good material, I didn't hesitate to take the role."*

# QUARK

A TV news feature by Tony Crawley

**R**ichard Benjamin, last seen by most of us ensnared in Michael Chrichton's masterly *Westworld* movie, is explaining why he's returned to television after an eleven year absence.

The reason is *Quark*. "A courageous hero," says Benjamin, "facing impossible odds yet able to overcome them in a noble way. He's not quite altogether upstairs, but is trying very hard."

Move over Luke and Han, we've got a new space hero. Commander Adam Quark — a 23rd Century intergalactic garbage collector patrolling the Milky Way, picking up space trash with the help of his quite insane crew, the UGSP or United Galaxy Sanitation Patrol.

It may not be pure science fiction. But it's funny, very funny. Like Benjamin says, it has to be. Buck Henry wrote it. For the record, Buck Henry, last seen acting as David Bowie's accountant in *The Man Who Fell To Earth*, also wrote *The Graduate*, *What's Up Doc*, *Catch 22*, *The Owl and the Pussycat*. And for television he created a similar mickey-take of spies, *Get Smart*; and years and years ago the short-lived series *Captain Nice* . . . Henry's personal favourite among his numerous credits.

Sight unseen in Britain, Capt. Nice dates back to 1966 and NBC. Replete with Buck Henry's wicked satire, it starred William Daniel as your average, bespectacled, mild-mannered chemist hitting upon a formula for transforming himself into a caped crusader.

Although Buck can't exactly pinpoint the inspiration of his new shows, he does recall the name Adam Quark stems from a word game. "In scientific lingo, a quark is the smallest part of the nucleon of an atom, which in turn makes it the smallest part of an atom." Yeah, that's Quark.

Commander Quark's oddball crew don't rate much higher on the IQ scale. . . .

Twins Trisha and Cibble Barnett are his co-pilots, Betty 1 and Betty 2 twin clones, mirror images of each other. Douglas V. Fowley (the forger from *The Money-changers*) is the ship's Rescue and Equipment Specialist, an irascible old scientist with an eye patch, the result of falling asleep at his microscope. He's called O. B. Mudd—"Dumbo backwards," adds Henry.

Tim Thomerson acts the part of the Klinger of this mashed-up outfit: a transmute chief engineer, possessing a full set of both male and female chromosomes,





armed charmer was dumped in favour of a quirky Mr. Spick send-up—Richard Kelton as Ficius, a very officious humanoid plant. Plus the (not quite) small powerful Force ... or rather, Source. (Or is that Sauce?) Out-doing Alec Guinness in this (voice-off) department is Hans Conreid, of blessed memory from *The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T*

Also jettisoned as space garbage for the series were the Mudd and Palindrome characters, giving pride of co-starring to Tim Thomerson's very hectic he-she role and Kelton's Ficius. Taking over Buck Henry's weirdos from here on in for the series on NBC are writers like Steve Zacharias, Bruce Kane and Jonathan Kaufer.

These are Buck Henry's latest comic creation—the weekly stars of this welcome return to simple half-hour comedy shows,

making him/her simultaneously a delicate vamp called Jean and a macho jock answering to Gene.

Stuntman Bobby Porter is the inevitable ship's robot, or servo-mechanical android, built somewhat carelessly by Dr. Mudd from a variety of spare parts, mostly, it would appear, from the space junk UGSP

Ergo is the ship's mascot. Ten pounds of congealed, shapeless protoplasm with a large eye in its mass, and a very nasty disposition. "Ergo," says producer David (Policewoman) Gerber, "is played by ... Ergo."

All these assorted nuts take their orders from home base: Perma One. Conrad Janis is Palindrome, superintendent-in-chief. Blonde Misty Rowe (from Mel Brooks' short-lived *Robin Hood* send-up, *When Things Were Rotten*) is Interface, all gold braid and four arms. Then, of course, there's the boss—actor-writer Alain Caillou as the over-worked Secretary-General. The head man. Or indeed, just The Head ... with a hat size of 36.

At least that was the line-up for Buck Henry's pilot. For the series, which kicked off with a full hour segment, Misty's four-



**Facing page:** British-born Alain Caillou as *The Head*. **Top Left:** Adam Quark (Richard Benjamin), with Betty 1, Betty 2 and scientist inventor O. B. Mudd. **Above:** O. B. Mudd (Douglas V. Fowler) and his robot creation, Andy. **Below:** Palindrome (Conrad Janis, standing) addresses an odd assortment of creatures from across the galaxy, including bespectacled, cigarette-smoking Buck Harris—the show's creator.



a pleasant departure from US-TV's over-long mini-series formats. Each week, though, brings in droves more daffy humanoids, quasi-norms, multi-peds or gravulties, which keeps Columbia's make-up teams working overtime on face-masks costing about £1,200 per mask.

The pilot show was, surprisingly, low on laughs. Buck Henry put the mix back in the melting pot before regurgitating a series that is quietly growing on Statesiders—rather like *Get Smart* did. Richard Benjamin is funnier than Don Addams ever was, but even he has to admit his show is stolen by (a) Buck Henry's mad humour and (b) Bobby Porter's robot.

Either way, when everyone else in Hollywood is getting so almighty serious about the subject, it could be fun to watch out for such episodes as: *All the Emperor's Quasi-Norms*, *May the Source be With You* and *Good-bye Polumbus*.



## The Star Wars Interview

# HARRISON FORD

## The Star Wars Star Going Solo

Han Solo, the Corellian space-buster, skipper of the .5 factors beyond lightspeed starship, *Millennium Falcon*—"watch your mouth kid... travelling through hyperspace ain't like dusting crops, boy!"—is being brought down to earth. Slowly. Travelling at a stationary speed of about six technicians to the minute. . . .

He stands barely recognisable in his shortened, World War II haircut, alongside Robert Shaw in a shaking railway cattle-truck, minus two sides to accommodate director Guy Hamilton and his camera-crew. The more muscular members of the Shepperton studios crew on C stage are pushing and pulling the truck to give it some semblance of motion, speed . . . or just plain movement.

The train is supposed to be rattling along. Like the action.

"Scene 619—take 1. . . ." Outside the truck, the supposed Yugoslavian countryside swings by on a revolving drum, reminiscent of the silent movie days. The film is *Force Ten From Navarone*, a starry war sequel to *The Guns of Navarone*—17 years after the event.

Since *Star Wars* flung him and the rest of the team into orbit as new superstars, Harrison Ford has been busier than most in deliberately escaping his inter-stellar imagery. In rapid order, he has carved himself a second-chance career replete with important shifts and changes in characterisation. However, all four roles since helping the skywalking Luke to demolish the Grand Moff Tarkin's Death Star, share one common factor with Han Solo. They're man of action. Soldiers. Fighting men. Waging war . . . and hopefully on the right side. If not necessarily the side of might.

Harrison Ford, then, is a war star.

Recently, he has either been promoted or demoted from an Army Intelligence Colonel in Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, to a veteran sergeant home from Vietnam, opposite Henry (De Fonz) Winkler in *Heroes*—and back to Lieut.-Colonel in the *Navarone* sequel. Lately, he has succeeded Kris Kristofferson as a B-52 pilot in the war-time romance, *Hanover Street*.

Once that's wrapped up, he'll have time enough for one more movie before returning to London for the start of *Star Wars 2* in February, 1979.

Harrison Ford, therefore, is going solo, rather than Solo.

Either way, he won't be chucking up movies for hammer, nails and carpentry again just yet awhile. That's what he did when he upped and quit acting

in 1970, "going crazy" with the ill-use and much abuse of being a contract player in Hollywood.

A son of Chicago, Ford began his career in 1963, after leaving a Wisconsin college "in academic disgrace three days before graduation". He'd been pushed into a lot of plays at the school—"there were only 600 students there"—and couldn't think of anything else to do for a living. He started acting also in Wisconsin, got married, put everything he and Mary owned into a car, flipped a coin to decide on Los Angeles or New York.

"It came up New York. So I flipped it again. . . I didn't want to starve to death in New York where it was cold. We drove off and didn't stop



until we saw the Pacific Ocean. As far as I was concerned, that ocean must be California—fine, let's stop right here, right now." Here was Laguna Beach. He got an acting job with the local Playhouse theatre, was spotted by some talent scout and wound up with a Columbia contract—"you're not the type we're usually interested in but . . ."

He lasted 18 months, with walk-ons and offs, mostly offs, in *Dead Heat On A Merry Go Round*, *Luv*, *The Long Ride Home* and *Getting Straight*. He quit in anger at the contract system and the way he was treated as a menial within it—and ran for immediate cover. Signing for Universal for a further 18 months of fairly non-productive endeavours. "Well, it was somewhat

better; less indignities. But I was getting older and they weren't using me, except in TV: *Ironsides*, *Guns of the Virginian*. I was 21. . . Look at me now, I'm 36 and everyone thinks I'm 26. At 21, everyone thought I was 17. Maybe they were right—I probably wasn't ready. So I was given tiny spaces to fill. Nothing where you could work on a role, take the space. I tell you, I was going crazy."

He quit again. Not merely Universal this time, but acting itself and began building other people's houses, or adding storeys or extensions to them. "It was the only job I had the clothes for," he grins. He started by stripping, gutting his own house and building it anew. His first contracted job was a \$100,000 recording studio for Sergio Mendes. Yet he knew nothing about carpentry. "I'd be up on Mendes' roof with a book in my hand. Fortunately, the Eacino public library was only three blocks away!"

The man who brought Harrison Ford back to the screen in 1972 was Fred Roos, Francis Coppola's right-hand man back in the days when he was still billing himself: Francis Ford Coppola. The film *Fred* suggested Ford would be good for was the second feature to be directed by one of Godfather Coppola's family of pupils, a certain George Lucas. *American Graffiti*. "I was Bob Falfa—the boy in the cowboy hat."

He enjoyed the experience. He enjoyed Lucas. He won his pride back as an actor. But he still played safe and went straight back to carpentry contracts. "I decided to be available only for films that seemed to be important."

Fred Roos phoned again—for Coppola's *The Conversation*, with Gene Hackman and Robert Duvall. In between other woodwork came TV movies like *The Trial of Lieut. Calley* and *The Possessed*. He was also one of Sarah Miles' children in *Dynasty*, one of David Frost's TV films, which could have been a *Roots* if Frost had not crammed all James A. Michener's book into two hours of prime time.

Incidentally, one of Ford's sisters in *Dynasty* was Amy Irving—Carrie's best friend in Brian De Palma's film, and currently Steven Spielberg's girlfriend.

Coppola, Roos, Lucas, Spielberg, De Palma—all the right connections for any acting carpenter. But if you feel that made it all very obvious that Lucas would send for Ford once *Star Wars* was finally lifting-off, you'd be very wrong . . .

Interview by Tony Crawley

**STARBURST:** When did you first hear about *Star Wars*—had Lucas discussed it during *American Graffiti*, for instance?

**FORD:** George had only let it be known that he wasn't going to use anybody from *American Graffiti*. . . . Not because anybody had disappointed him, but he was writing a whole new thing, needed new faces. There was no reason to consider the same actors—it would have just tied the

two films together.

So I knew what was going on. I also knew I couldn't be in it. That's all I knew about the project. I certainly didn't know what the story was about, because I don't see George that much. He lives in San Anselmo, which is in Northern California. But anyway, good old Fred Roos did it again. He prevailed upon George to consider me for the part, after he had seen

everybody else. This was no more than three or four weeks before the final decision was to be made.

How did he select you?

I did a test. A video-test—same place where we did the tests for *American Graffiti*, same kinda routine. Just a couple of pages of script. No explanation [laughs]—just get in there and do it! That's all we had, a couple of loose pages.







*Most people say they never understood the full script. What did you make of a couple of pages?*

Well, it seemed pretty clear to me. It was a bizarre situation—outer space and everything. But the film itself, or this scene, was very contemporary. The characters were very contemporary as well. And the whole situation was very simple—without meaning that in any derogatory way. It's just fairly simple, straightforward. So I didn't think there was any problem. I just went ahead and did it.

*And got it! Did this test scene stay in the final movie?*

The scene was rewritten some, but I did pretty much in the movie what I did in the test.

*Were you flying Solo at this stage, or testing with others?*

I tested with a couple of people. Then, they asked me back to do tests with all the other selections. So I ended up doing tests with about a hundred people.

*With a giant stuffed gorilla representing Chewbacca?*

No, no stuffed gorilla. Two folding

*Above: The 3-D chess sequence from Star Wars aboard the Millennium Falcon. From left to right: Chewbacca, C-3PO, C-R2-D2, Han Solo and Obi-Wan Kenobi. Below: The cynical face of Corellian space pirate, Han Solo.*



chairs and a bare background. That's b-a-r-e—not b-e-a-r.

*What then did you feel about the full script? Or do you in fact share any of George's love of sf?*

No, I didn't know anything about all of that. When I read it, I thought, Oh boy! What is this about? I didn't know! The thing that was apparent to me from reading it was that there was a very clear human story involved there. I didn't have to *act* science fiction. I just had to work in context of the other characters. I had to supply something in that same context.

It was really ensemble casting. George's second choice was three entirely different actors. Not one of us and two others, or two of us and one other. It was us three—or three other people. He cast it ensemble. And for me, it was almost obvious what the relationship should have been—or could have been. Simply by looking at the other people.

*Can you name the other trio?*

I don't think George wants me to do that. Ask George. . . . (Patrick Duffy, TV's long sunk *Man From Atlantis*, was

among those testing for Luke.)

The most vital factor about Solo is that he provides sudden, vibrant life to that film. Into the valley of all these innocents—Luke, Leia, Ben and to robots—comes this wry, worldly-wise, cynical hero, with an eye to the main chance. He's the most human character in *Star Wars*. And he arrives just in time to stave off boredom.

That's Lucas's genius, you know. . . . That's all because of him. All the words were there and it was his choice of who to cast in them. He gave me a lot of freedom to change little parts of dialogue which weren't comfortable, to add little things where I saw fit. We worked together on it. I really liked working with him.

And this was the first time in my whole career that I had a character that was big enough where I could just take space. Instead of just filling in spaces as I did at Columbia and Universal. . . . I could do that for the first time. Even with Alec Guinness there.

Most of the cast seemed to be in considerable awe of Sir Alec.

Oh, he gave me many a sleepless night. I'd be thinking, "Oh Christ! I'm supposed to be in a movie with Alec Guinness!! He will just laugh at me once—and I'll pack up and go home." But, of course, he never did. He's really a very kind and generous person.

Who was it—you or George—who decided to base Solo, or certain of his remarks and actions, on John Wayne?

It never came up. I never thought about that . . . until I kept seeing it mentioned in reviews. I mean, I literally really didn't think about it. Or know I was doing it. I have never been a big movie fan, the way a lot of actors are—  
—or these days, the way a lot of directors are, Lucas included.

Yeah. And for me, I think that's probably good. Well, I mean it's not good, not to have seen all of that stuff. But in other ways, it is. If I end up acting like John Wayne and I realise I'm acting like John Wayne, I'm in heaps of trouble. But if I don't realise I'm acting like John Wayne and I am acting like John Wayne, then that is simply part of my subconscious supplying something that is necessary for the role, rather than deliberately coming in with something that will serve—instead of doing something that I really should be doing. . . . you know what I mean?

Definitely. You're right, too, of course. The Wayne touches are only there in places—in the right places. It's not an impression, a mimicking of Wayne; but it's influenced by him where it counts.

Fine. Now I understand what you're saying! I was never aware of doing a routine. It's just part of my sub-conscious at work. Acting is so intensely personal that if you're not operating—totally!—within your own resources, there comes a moment when you'll be stuck, you won't know who to imitate. Much better to use

your own personality and resources as a tool and keep them both sharp and well oiled. So, truthfully, I was not aware of doing a Wayne. I thought I was playing Harrison Ford!

Really?

Well. . . . No. That's not true, either. It's my alter ego, perhaps. . . .

Playing what you'd like Harrison Ford to be?

Well, I'm not sure I'd like him to be that way!



Columbia's Force Ten From Navarone. Harrison Ford: "At 21, everyone thought I was 17. Now I'm 36 and everyone thinks I'm 26!"

How did you relate to a wild co-star like Chewbacca?

I just said to myself, "Look, you've got this huge dog." You understand? I made Chewie into a pet relationship. But it's like any other thing in that movie. People say: How did you act with all those special effects? Well, it's no different from than in any other picture. You saw us just now, Robert Shaw and I in a cattle truck, pretending there were walls all the way around us . . . chugging along some track in Yugoslavia. It's stress up and pretend time.

Your stand-out best moment of glory in the film was when having wasted a bunch of Death Star guards, you're forced to answer their intercom—shoot out a stream of chat and orders before blasting it with your gun. Very funny scene, that.

And done in one take. . . . I never learned the dialogue for it because I wanted to show a sense of desperation. I told George I wanted to do it all the way through the first time. I just said, "Stop me if I'm really bad." He didn't. . . .

What did you think of *Star Wars*

yourself?

Terrific! I first saw it probably a whole year later after shooting. I thought it was just . . . incredible. [Laughs]. Terrific! Fantastic!

What about the public's reaction to you—people in the street, fan mail and so on? Is that enjoyable, or was it in any form a pain in the neck to have been in the most successful movie of all time?

Oh, no—are you kidding? It's just like in the movies. An overnight success.

Albeit that the night was 15 years long! It's opened up a line of doors.

Fortunately I don't have as unique a physiognomy as Carrie or Mark do, so I'm much less recognised in the streets—about which I'm very happy. That could get heavy. It happens infrequently enough, and people are usually very nice because the film is so broadly accepted—so that's a pleasure. But when they know where we're going to be, and they're sitting outside the hotel—all these autograph people—sometimes that's a drag. But none of it really bothers me.

Apart from a very successful career comeback, do you have any personal souvenirs of the film?

No. I just ain't sentimental that way.

You've worked for both Francis Coppola and George Lucas—in fact you may be the only actor to have worked twice for both of them. What's the main difference between them as directors?

Well, they both have beards. [laughs]. Really I think it's a difference of personality. And to describe the way they work . . . really presumptuous for an actor to get



into that kind of discussion. Anyway, it would be beyond me. I'm not really intellectually equipped to make those kind of pronouncements. My mind doesn't work that way. I know—sure I know. But it would take me two days to explain it to you.

*I take it you'd work for these two again anytime, while many other directors you wouldn't even build a loo for.*

Exactly. [Laughs]. That's very true, yeah. Let me say one important part of their technique is allowing actors certain freedoms. They're both . . . delightful. But every director is different, of course they are. It's a matter of personality.

*What about producers, the people in the front office. Are any of those that gave you such a hard time in your contract days still around.*

Oh they're still around. But they don't call me "boy" anymore. But they still call me. Because they don't care what I think of them, and they don't care what they used to think of me. They just don't relate to that. They relate only—totally—to the success of *Star Wars*.

*So you won't be working for them.*

I don't have set plans. I'm not ambitious, not really.

*Few stars ever say that.*

Look, I don't consider myself to be a star because I'm too much aware of the functionality of that word. I don't happen to think I'm good enough. I'm a perfectionist and I always think I could have done things better. That's one reason I never see rushes of a film I'm making. I never know how any character is going to work out. I never really know, not even when I eventually see the final movie. Because I can't stand to see myself. I know how much better it might have been if I'd had the intelligence at the time—that's the worst part about filming, absolutely the worst part.

*So you've no plans beyond *Star Wars 2*?*

I just want to keep on working. You grow older and your career changes, all the better. I just hope things are still as scary as they are now for my next seven years. Well, not scary—but needing to keep on your toes. I'd like to be surprised at the parts offered to me. I'd like roles that I'd never imagined for myself, you know.

Otherwise, what happens. If you start churning out bull, it lives on long after you've flushed yourself. It's still up there 40 ft. high and 60 ft. wide screaming, "Bull, bull, bull! This guy was a fraud."

*(Irvin Kershner has since been announced as director of the first sequel; his latest movie is Faye Dunaway's Eyes, from a script by John (Dark Star) Carpenter. George Lucas confirms that Chewbacca, R2-D2, C-3PO and Darth Vader will return for No. 2 in a script from another of his Luke Skywalker adventures by Leigh Brackett, an sf. writer whose classic movies include The Big Sleep and Rio Bravo. Shooting is scheduled for Lapland and Africa, costing \$10,000,000.)*

*Final question: how come your sons are called Willard and Ben?*

They came first. Work it out. . . . They're aged nine and eleven. And I swear to you that I do not know the people who made those films. I know nothing about all of that. It's as much a surprise to me as it was to my sons.

I mean, come on, do I look the kind of fella who would name my kids after two rat movies!

# IS IT A SERIES? IS IT A MOVIE? NO, IT'S.....A STAR TREK

*No one seems sure whether Star Trek is an upcoming tv series, a feature film . . . or a thing of the past. The following feature is meant to bring you up to date on exactly what is happening in the on-off world of Star Trek.*

Feature by Sam E. Delii

Ever since the third season ended, there has been a mighty hue and cry for more Star Trek.

Star Trek, a series that made television history. Though it only ran for 79 episodes across three seasons, from 1966-69 (with its first pilot filmed in December, 1964), Star Trek created more commotion, more merchandising, more audience reaction than possibly any other tv series—before or after.

The fan response to the series was so great that the show gathered such titles as "the series they (Paramount tv) couldn't kill". While a "Save Space 1999" attempt has been under way for some time now, it cannot hope to reach the epic proportions of fan mail that Paramount were besieged with when they tried to kill off the series due to dropping ratings.

But still the series died. Almost sabotaged. It was placed in the worst possible time slot, a new producer appeared, script quality deteriorated, the enthusiasm seemed to be waning.

Yet the ever-faithful fans wanted more. In the face of such opposition to killing the show completely, the network finally revived Star Trek. But, not willing to risk the huge expenses of new sets, inflated salaries and such, Filmation Studios were given the go-ahead for producing an animated series.

With such credits as the Archie and Superman kiddie shows, disjointed dubbing (the original cast's voices were used, but often done separately, thus giving no sharp rapport between characters) and Saturday morning airing hours, the series was doomed to failure.

Still the loyal fans demanded more.

And so it was, in early 1975, that the powers-that-be finally agreed to make a feature-length live action Star Trek movie. Movie economics being such that once the sets were made, a follow-up tv series would be much more feasible. Then in May 1975 pre-production work began. Initially Paramount rejected screenplays from some of the top Star Trek series writers. Authors such as Harlan Ellison, Theodore Sturgeon,

Chris Knopf and even Gene Roddenberry were faced with reject slips.

Eventually, in July of 1976, British writers Chris Bryant and Alan Scott were brought in by Paramount. Eight months later, they presented their end-product. It was rejected.

Rumours differed from week to week. One claimed that Roddenberry's script had sent the original Enterprise crew back into space, years after their promotions, in search of the missing Enterprise 2. And, true to the mission's aim of "to boldly go where no man has gone before", they

November 1977, production actually got under way on the Star Trek tv series.

Roddenberry, having suffered various sci-fi tv pilot flops, entered the fray with renewed vigour. Moves were made to re-unite the cast of ten years previous. The fans were delighted. And the inevitable rumours started once more. Who would return to the show, who wouldn't, what new crew would appear. Nimoy was quoted as saying he would not even consider playing Mr. Spock. Nimoy denied even being approached and said he would agree . . . if he had no prior commitments



wandered beyond the known universe . . . and met God.

. . . Of such stuff are rumours made.

Early in June 1977, all rumours were totally squashed when Paramount announced that all plans were off. But even then, fans were heard to say that Paramount executives had seen a preview of Star Wars and decided that Trek couldn't hope to compete.

But perhaps Star Wars didn't steal Trek's crown totally. When the box-office takings shot right through the roof on Lucas's space fantasy, and everybody moved into sci-fi production, Paramount switched back to their tv plans. So, in

and a salary could be agreed on. But Shatner agreed without reservation, an announcement being made as early as September 1977.

But now, for some reason yet to be explained, the tv series is off again!

The movie is go.

Which puts Gene Roddenberry right back where he was three years ago. Except he at least has sets built and slightly revised costumes designed (by Bill Theiss). Plus the considerably upped budget—doubled to a round six million dollars.

. . . Which still leaves him three and a half million dollars (and two years) behind George Lucas.



# SUPERMAN

© DC COMICS INC 1977

## ~CHOICE ENCOUNTERS OF THE SALKIND

Feature by Tony Crawley

'Just before the doomed planet, Krypton, exploded to fragments, a scientist placed his infant son within an experimental rocket-ship, launching it towards Earth. . .'

**1935.** Fourth year of the Depression, when fantasy came in handy. One long hot summer night in Cleveland, Ohio—Shazam! Teenager Jerry Siegel, adventure fiction fan, has a bright idea. The brightest. It's still burning today.

Next morning, Jerry pounds the door of his pal, Joe Schuster, a would-be cartoonist. Jerry spills his story. Joe scribbles it in sketches. The Man of Steel is born. Now, how to sell it to the newspaper funnies, or maybe a comic? Not easy.

**1938.** The long fight is won. Superman makes it in Action Comics, in June. "Champion of the Oppressed, the physical marvel who had sworn to devote his existence to helping those in need."

The original comic sold for ten cents a copy, a mint edition today would fetch \$5,000. Action's circulation became colossal, and put Superman to newspaper funnies within six months. America's premier superhero (he could hurdle a twenty-storey building, leap an eighth of a mile, raise tremendous weights, run faster than an express train, and nothing less than a bursting shell could penetrate his skin) had arrived to be swiftly followed by a stream of copy-cats in capes and wrinkle-less tights. Capt. Marvel, Green Lantern, Baitman, Wonder Women, etc.

"What made Superman extraordinary," said cartoonist Jules Feiffer in *The Great Comic Book Heroes*, "was his point of origin. Clark Kent. (He) was the put-on. The fellow with the eyeglasses and the acne and the walk girls laughed at wasn't real, didn't exist, was a sacrificial disguise, an act of discreet martyrdom. He is Superman's opinion of the rest of us. . . His false identity was our real one. That's why we loved him so."

In those intervening five years, the Ohio teenager had grown up. Jerry's byline read "by Jerome Siegel". Joe remained Joe Shuster, not a good artist, thought Feiffer, but representing the best of old-time comic-book art direct, unpretentious, crude, vigorous. "When assistants began 'improving' the strip, it looked as though it were being drawn in a bank."

But by then, Superman—with a 61-billion readers in 38 countries and 14 languages—wasn't a bird or a plane but an industry.

**1940.** Superman on radio. Starring Bud Collier.

**1941-3.** Superman in cinema. 17 excellent Paramount cartoons by Popeye's animator, Dave Fleischer.

**1943.** Superman in books—George Lowther's novel.

**1948 (check date).** Superman in cinema. A 15-part Columbia serial starring Kirk Alyn.

**1951.** Superman back in cinema. George Reeves plays our hero in *Superman and the Mole Men*. Phyllis Coates is a great Lois Lane.

**1953-7.** Superman in television. Six seasons on ABC. 104 half-hour episodes, all but the first 51 in colour. Reeves and Coates continued as Superman and Lois for opening seasons, which included a TV version of the *Mole Men* movie. Noel Neill took over as Lois for the rest of the series. John Hamilton was Perry White; Jack Larson, Jimmy Olsen. At times, four shows would be shot in ten days—at \$1500 each.

**1960s.** Superman back in TV for cartoon series.

**1966.** Superman on stage—It's a Bird, It's a Plane, It's Superman. A Broadway musical yet.

**1974.** Superman for dinner. Café de la Pitié, Place de l'Opéra, Paris. The diners are father and son film-makers, Alexander and Ilya Salkind.

The Salkind family (headed by Ilya's grandpop, Michael, another movie-man) come from Russia, settled in Paris and make films everywhere from Spain to Hungary. Alex and Ilya are now Mexican citizens. Their common language remains French and big movies. Their budgets seem bottomless. Hence their meal. With \$50,000,000 coming in from *The Three Musketeers* films alone—what next?

Ilya, 26, spent part of his youth in the States. He votes for Superman. Alex, more Euro-cultured, is unfamiliar with Clark Kent, Ilya's partner. Pierre Spengler—a Paris-born Russian with a dash of Dutch—votes for Superman. Alex checks it out. "Okay, but it has to be bigger than big!"

Big means big names. Not the Salkinds' best



The two faces of our Kryptonian hero. On the left, Christopher Reeve as mild-mannered reporter Clark Kent; on the right as the man of steel himself, Superman.

forte. Remember, the abysmal pairing of Kirk Douglas and Samantha Eggar in *The Light at the Edge of the World*? Worse still, Burton as *Bluebeard*? The Salkinds still regard Raquel Welch and Mark Lester as box-office, use Charlton Heston too much and put the unctuous Michael York in *Musketeers*... and buried poor Chabrol's *Twist* film with Ann-Margret and other facing blooms.

That's the trouble with "internationalism." No class.

For once, though, Ilya starts off on the right foot. With bankable writers. He tries Oscar-winner William Goldman: *Butch Cassidy, All the President's Men*. Bill tries, gives up. Ilya tries more noted scribes. They give up. Ilya turns to *Godfather* author Mario Puzo. He never gives up. At least not until after a 150-page storyline. "I'm played out."

Next, a director. Someone who's been making big money, Ilya tries Schaffner, Coppola, Friedkin and a couple of youngsters, Lucas and Spielberg. Funny, but they're all into their own thing. Ilya settles on Guy Hamilton, *saute* Briton behind the best of 007 both Connery and Moore versions. Budget: \$16,000,000. Shooting is announced for America. Tax-wise, Hamilton can't afford to stay in Britain.

1975. But it isn't so easy. The Salkinds are trapped six months in what they call the copyright labyrinth. Warner Brothers hold all rights, so it's negotiation time. Ilya gives in where he has to, in order to own *Superman* for the next 25 years. "Pierre and I envisage making *Superman* movies for years to come, like Cubby Broccoli with the Bonds. "Always supposing it doesn't take 25 years to get this first one off the ground... and it's looking that way. Budget rises to \$20,000,000.

Bonnie and Clyde's David Newman and Robert Benton, plus Dave's brother Leslie, polish the Puzo groundwork into script form. "Really sensational," praises Ilya. "A complete story on every level." Shooting announced for Rome. But no actor for the Man of Steel's role. 1976. Big surprise. Big name Marlon Brando signed as *Superman's* dad, Jor-El for the biggest ever salary: £2,250,000 for 12 days work. That's £187,500 a day. That's £312 and 50p a minute. We'd need to toil for 643 years to earn that kind of brass.

Gene Hackman inked for Luthor (without even having to shave his head), with less publicity, but similar look; Luthor never had it this good. Marlon still wins, he also nets 11.3% of the profits. He'll lose 50%, in US taxes, but as Peter Evans once wrote, Brando makes a lot of scratch out of an itch.

"Brando is no gimmick," stresses Ilya. "Puzo's story has Jor-El reappearing throughout. That's what makes this movie work. Lose Jor-El and *Superman* is just the ultimate good guy dull. What's his motivation?" (He's beginning to sound like Brando). "We're adding to the three or four 'original' legends, getting into a much bigger level. Jor-El is the core. Everything, *Superman*, revolves around him."

And Brando's opinion? "What we have to do is preserve the myth of *Superman*. This film is a Valentine. There's no point in hanging pumpkin on a morning glory." Er, how's that again?

Budget now up to \$25,000,000. Shooting slated for Shepperton studios and maybe Rome. Tax trouble for Guy Hamilton. But now *The Onion* is out and Richard Donner is hot. So for Hamilton read Donner, who brings in 007-writer Tom Mankiewicz as "creative consultant" (or re-write man). But still who plays *Superman*?

1977. Is it a Redford? Is it a Caan? Is it a Reynolds? No, it's a Christopher Reeve. *Who?* You won't be asking next year. Robert Redford felt he'd look a schmuck flying. Jimmy Caan mumbles worse than Marlon. Reynolds comes out but Sly Stone is too lumpy. Arnold Schwarzenegger too bumpy and Conan anyway, and US

No. 1

JUNE, 1938

# ACTION COMICS

10¢



How it all began. The front cover of *Action Comics* No. 1. The June 1938 10¢ comic book that introduced the world to a new breed of hero, and introduced the publishing world to a new market for profits.

Olympic decathlon champ Bruce Jenner, No. 1 favourite, considered too young. Reeve is 24, 6 ft. 4 in., and adding inches to chest and biceps in a quick body-building course... courtesy of Darth Vader himself—muscleman Dave Prowse.

Reeve's driver tells him "you've got it" en route for London airport after screen-test; two weeks later he hears officially. He's spent ten years on stage, and had a daily 18 million audience in a TV soap-opera, *Love of Life*. His first (only) film is *Grey Lady Down*, the nuclear sub disaster number with Charlton Heston and David Carradine. "Thank God," says Ilya, "I got stars for Jor-El and Luthor and could put *as* unknown in the middle." \$250,000 is a lot for an unknown, but Ilya needs to keep him sweet for the sequels.

Shooting to occupy both Shepperton and Pinewood for seven months and eight week's American locations. Well, it's two movies now, *Superman* I and II, shot at once, like Ilya's *Musketeers* trick. Most money, though, going

on Brando, Hackman and the special effects.

Frankly, the rest of the cast is less than inspired, an unhappy mix of US and UK "star names", chosen to appease British Equity, insisting on British actors involved, and DC Comics banning any actors from sex-films—apart, supposedly, from *Last Tango*'s Brando.

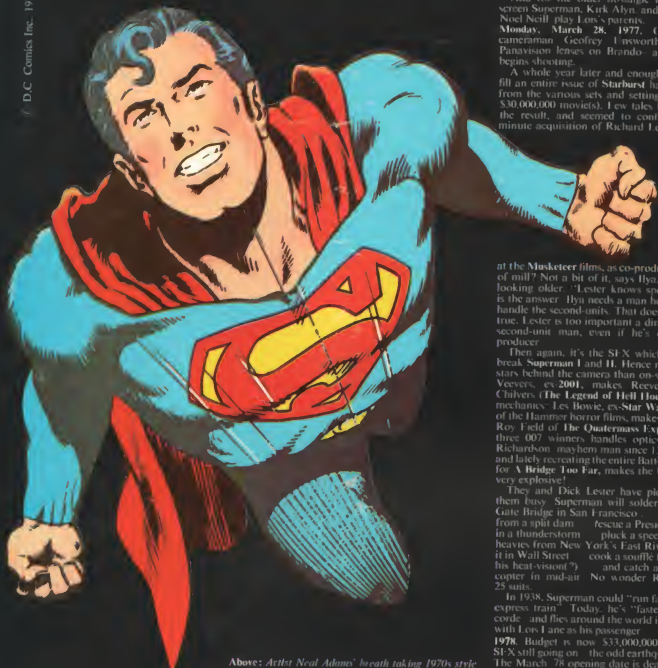
Luthor's playmate Valerie Perrine best known for repeating her nude debut in *Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse Five*. Why, even Margot Kidder, the new Lois Lane, was nude once in *Playboy*!

At times it seems that any "star" actually in London is engaged, to avoid flying them in. Which could explain Glenn Ford as Jonathan Kent, Susannah York as Brando's wife, and Terence Stamp, suddenly in from the cold, as Kryptonian heavy General Zod.

Veteran Jackie Cooper (his 1931 classic, *The Champ*, is about to be re-made) is Perry White; Mark McClure, from Disney's *Freaky Friday*, is Jimmy Olsen.







Above: Artist Neal Adams' breath taking 1970s style Superman for DC Comics. Below: The actors who will turn the comic strip legend into live-action cinema: Marlon Brando (as Superman's father Jor-el), Mark McClure (as Jimmy Olsen), Margot Kidder, as Lois Lane, and Jackie Cooper (as newspaper editor Perry White)

And for the older nostalgic fans, the first screen Superman, Kirk Alyn, and the TV-L-oids Noel Neill play Lois's parents. Monday, March 28, 1977, Oscar-winning cameraman Geoffrey Unsworth trains his Panavision lenses on Brando and Superman begins shooting.

A whole year later and enough rumours to fill an entire issue of *Starburst* have emanated from the various sets and settings of the now \$30,000,000 movie(s). Few tales bode well for the result, and seemed to confirm the last-minute acquisition of Richard Lester, director

at the *Muskeeter* films, as co-producer. Trouble of mill? Not a bit of it, says Ilya, 29 now and looking older. "Lester knows special-effects," is the answer. Ilya needs a man he can trust to handle the second-units. That doesn't ring very true. Lester is too important a director to be a second-unit man, even if he's officially co-producer.

Then again, it's the SFX which will make break *Superman Land II*. Hence more genuine stars behind the camera than on-screen. Wally Veveers, ex-2001, makes Reeve fly. Colin Chivers (The Legend of Hell House), controls mechanics. Les Bowie, ex-Star Wars and most of the Hammer horror films, makes the models. Roy Field of The Quatermass Experiment and three 007 winners handles optics, and John Richardson, mayhem man since 13 on *Exodus*, and lately recreating the entire Battle of Arnhem for *A Bridge Too Far*, makes the US locations very explosive!

They and Dick Lester have plenty to keep them busy. Superman will solder the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. stem waters from a split dam. rescue a Presidential plane in a thunderstorm. pluck a speedboat full of heavies from New York's East River and drop it in Wall Street. cook a soufflé for Lois with his heat vision? and catch a falling helicopter in mid-air. No wonder Reeves needs 25 suits.

In 1938, Superman could "run faster than an express train." Today, he's "faster than Con corde" and flies around the world in 90 seconds with Lois Lane as his passenger.

1978. Budget is now \$33,000,000 and rising. SFX still going on the odd earthquake or two. The March '78 opening date is dead and gone, now it's set for Christmas with music of course, from John Williams. Ilya seems happy. And Christopher himself sums the film up like this. "It's adventure. It's comedy. It's romance. It's Fantasia. It's 2001. It's Love Story."

All we wanted was Superman, . . .





# BOOK WORLD

Reviewed by Alex Carpenter and Sam E. Oati



**FOTONOVEL 1: CITY ON THE EDGE OF FOREVER** (Corgi - 160 pages - 85p) This paperback will make an interesting addition to any Star Trek fan's bookshelf. The idea of using stills and speech "bubbles" to re-create a film or television episode is not new but this series takes the concept one stage further by reproducing the photographs in full colour. Over 300 extremely well printed stills have been used to retell this Marlon Ellison Trek episode and the amazingly low price makes this extremely good value. There is at least one more Trek adaptation to come in the series ("Where No Man Has Gone Before") and hopefully the idea will be successful enough for this format to continue. It makes a pleasant change from the American comic book approach to movie adaptations. **AC/SEO**



**PLANET OF JUDGEMENT** by Joe Haldeman (Corgi - 152 pages - 70p) Joe Haldeman won both the Hugo and Nebula Awards in 1975 for his sf novel *The Forever War*. Both *Forever War* and his later book *Mindbridge* were excellent science fiction and his excursion into the world of Star Trek was viewed with interest. *Planet of Judgement* is diluted

Haldeman but 100% proof Star Trek. All the touches that made his previous books so enjoyable are present but they have been slightly stifled by the need to write within the confines of the series. But even with this in mind, the book is highly recommended. **AC**

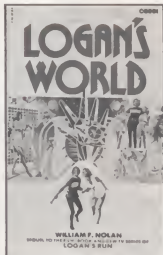
**THE PRICE OF THE PHOENIX** by Sondra Marshak & Myrnie Culbreth (Corgi - 162 pages - 75p) Star Trek seems to be having a new lease of life with Corgi. This is one of two new Star Trek novels that they have published at the same time as the "Fotonovel". The authors have created an exceptional villain and the plot, based upon the death and rebirth of Captain Kirk, has some interesting aspects. Unfortunately the handling of the relationship between Spock and Kirk is the book's major flaw. It may be that, because the authors are fans of the series, they want their heroes to be more lifelike; but the final result is periods of exaggerated reaction whenever the major characters respond to each other. This only serves to make a possibly exciting book slow going in places. **AC**



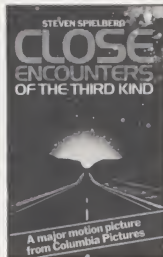
**BLAKE'S 7** by Trevor Hoyle (Sphere - 204 pages - 85p) This novelisation of Terry Nation's BBC-TV series is pure space opera, though enjoyable, as it carries the story of Roy Blake through to the formation of his Seven after his first blow against the Federation. Sphere deserves an award for their hard-sell, with a cover line on this book of "From the Publishers of Star Wars". Such a claim is meaningless as they only bought British rights to an existing novel. One wonders what would have happened if they had a religious department that had reprinted the Bible. **AC/SEO**

**LOGAN'S WORLD** by William F. Nolan (Corgi - 150 pages - 70p) Although the cover proclaims this as the sequel to film, book and TV series (1),

wisely the author has chosen to ignore the alternative "Runs" created by cinema and television. As a sequel to the original book it is a disappointment. "Logan's Run" worked because the setting was different; "Logan's World" is just another "Earth after disaster"



novel. It is well written but no different from so many other books that are set after the collapse of civilisation. The story takes place ten years after the events in "Logan's Run"; Logan and Jessica have returned from Sanctuary only to face further perils. **AC/SEO**

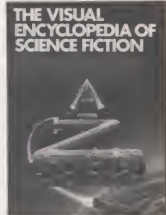


**CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND** by Steven Spielberg (Sphere - 240 pages - 85p) This novelisation ("from the publishers of Who's Who in sf") actually works very well. Differing from the original manuscript by Spielberg — perhaps another ghost writer? The basic story of the effect of a UFO sighting on one man is tautly told and holds the attention right through to the final contact with the aliens. **AC/SEO**

**SO BRIGHT THE VISION** by Clifford O. Simek (Magnum - 180 pages - 70p)

This is a collection of four short stories each dealing with alien visitors to our planet. All four stories are told in a pleasant tongue-in-cheek manner that makes them a joy to read. **AC**

**THE LAVALITE WORLD** by Philip Jose Farmer (Aca - US import - 282 pages - £1.10) After nearly eight years of the first book in the "World of Tiers" series is finally available. It has been a long wait but well worth it. Farmer's imagination works overtime creating unusual worlds for his hero to defeat. The Lavalite World is no exception: constantly changing its shape as Kikkah and company seek a way off it and back to the World of Tiers. Hopefully the wait for book six won't be so long. **AC**



**THE VISUAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION** Edited by Brian Ash (Pan - 352 pages - 10 1/2 x 7 1/2 - £5.50) The majority of this book is taken up with an interesting analysis of Science Fiction's main themes. Chapters are entitled "Lost and Parallel Worlds", "Galactic Empires", "Robots and Androids" etc. and discuss the various ways in which different authors have approached the subject. Many examples are given and the whole book is packed with photos, illustrations and cover reproductions. The first part of the book is an easy to follow history of science fiction. Starting in 1805 it covers magazines, books, television, radio, films and fandom up to 1976. The final third of the book covers items peripheral to Science Fiction including fandom, SF art, comics etc. Unfortunately, TV and cinema SF have once again been pushed into the background by Mr Ash. Although both TV and Films have their own section a total of only 12 pages is allocated to them. When you consider how important a role is played by the visual media it is a mistake to try to cover the whole genre and yet dismiss television and films so quickly. Although it has many shortcomings, it is very interesting for the areas deeply covered but far from being the book its title claims. **AC**

To say we've been inundated with mail over our first two issues would be an understatement. While we'd love to print all your opinions, we just don't have the space. With over a thousand letters in our bulging postbag, it could fill this whole issue.

So, to try to fit in as many of your comments as possible, here are some of the highlights of your letters, before moving into the deeper comments...

Starburst is the only magazine that keeps me up to date on what's going on in the sf world. Would like to see an article on the Gerry Anderson programmes.

... Colin Baptiste, London  
... a great magazine. Let's have features on *Space 1999*, *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* and *Lost in Space*.

... P. Littlefield, Shrewsbury  
... your magazine is very good, but I would like to see a little less on Star Wars, fewer cartoon strips, and more on new films. ... Mark Wildman, Wiford  
... enlarge *Things to Come*, also keep those interesting reviews and interviews coming.

... David Rogers, Feltham  
... I think the *Jeff Hawke* cartoon strip is excellent and the features are very informative. I like best *Things to Come*, with all its interesting news. An excellent magazine.

... F. Meehan, Barlborough  
... keep reviewing tv sf and fantasy. I love the comic relief strips. A good companion magazine to *House of Hammer*.  
... Kevin J. Tacey, Romford  
... the best of mag I have ever read. The best thing in issue 2 was the *Space Cruiser* article and the brilliant poster.

... Robert Kaane, Harrow  
... a marvellous mag. I enjoy both the articles and *Jeff Hawke*. The only thing that would improve Starburst would be articles on older films and special effects.

... Terence Muato, Uplminster  
... Comments: keep *Jeff Hawke* and come out once a week.  
... Carlos Altgelt, Iagrove  
... great how you pack so much in one issue. I'd like to see more about old films.

... Peter Walsh, Long Eaton  
... in future issues I would like to see more on robots. I believe Starburst is the magazine sf fans have been waiting for.  
... A. Fletcher, Sidcup  
... absolutely delighted with the coverage given to *Space Cruiser* in Starburst 2 and also very impressed with the quality of the magazine generally.

... John Hogarth, Enterprise Pictures Limited  
... it seems very good to me that somebody can produce intelligent sf stories as well as reviews on current movies and tv shows. For this I have nothing but praise.  
... Richard Thomas, Forest Gate  
... keep up the first class work. My favourite features are *Jeff Hawke*, *Things to Come* and your film reviews. In the future I would like to see features on fantasy artist Frank Frazetta, Marvel's sword and sorcery heroes and the Planet of the Apes films.

... Gary Edwards, Teignmouth  
... the magazine is excellent, but perhaps too much emphasis on the cartoons.  
... John Minto, Chester-le-Street  
... I think Starburst is a great magazine. But how about exploded drawings of space ships?

... Andrew Adams, Market Deeping  
... more pages, more quizzes, more colour photos. I know this will then be a higher costing mag, but I think it would be worth it. ... M. Hollard, Lincoln City  
... Expensive, but well worth paying to obtain the colour. Excellent choice of subjects in issue 2. Far more interesting than coverage of older sf films which are already featured in books. I especially liked the *Prisoner* feature. I did not enjoy Ray Bradbury's

interpretation of *Close Encounters*. He seems to be reading too much into what is a commercial venture, not a new religion. ... Freaser Gray, Dyrington  
... I think there should be more poster reproductions from sf films. ... Anthony Coombes, Birkenhead  
... Far superior to any other sci-fi mags available.

... Nicholas Dean, Broadstone  
... Enjoyed Star Wars and Spiderman. Disliked *Jeff Hawke*. More articles instead.  
... Robert Iddow, Trimpleton  
... perhaps more space could be given to sf in comics (British and American).

... Nicholae Bowler, Hedge End  
... the greatest! In issue 1 I liked Harry Harrison's story, *Things to Come* and the Star Wars features. In issue 2: *Spiderman*, *Close Encounters*, *The Prisoner* and *Space Cruiser*. I would like to see features on early sf films, plus recent tv fantasy like *Bionic Woman*, *Logan's Run* and *Blake's 7*. There's nothing in Starburst I dislike.

... Richard Gladmore, Blitchley  
... I would like more colour, and more on Star Wars.  
... Derek Bury, Eccles  
... Starburst is superb. Like a breath of fresh air. I remember you saying in *House of Hammer* that the US tv series *Wonder Woman* would be on tv here soon, now you have the show mentioned in Starburst. But still no tv screenings. Let's have more on *Shazam*, *Isis*, *Supergirl* and *Spiderman*.

... Mike Wilkison, Hull  
... I especially liked the article on Star Trek and the Harry Harrison story in issue 1, and the *Prisoner* and *Close Encounters* features in issue 2. Although I like Star Wars, I hope it won't dominate the magazine. Include some British tv sci-fi, like *Dr Who*, *UFO* and *Space 1999*. ... J. Armstrong, Cumberland  
... very impressed with Starburst. Glad you tackle media sci-fi on a more adult level than other magazines before you. How about an article on special effects?

... Steven Begg, Edinburgh  
... I find Starburst most interesting. Hope you will do long articles on *Demetrios Almy* and *Silent Running*.  
... Simon Mescock, Norwich  
... I started getting your magazine from issue 1, and I like it. But not the title, yes!

... Garath Hughes, Wimbledore Park  
... an excellent magazine. It is a good idea to cover all aspects of sf and not just films. Don't concentrate too much on one or two subjects. Issue 1 was a bit boring and repetitive. Issue 2 much, much better, the best sci-fi mag I (or any of my friends) have seen. The comic stories are good, but *Jeff Hawke* was a mistake—too boring and drawn out. A very polished and good looking magazine, when are you going monthly?

... John Huat, Ipswich  
... nice to see sf and fantasy treated in an adult manner. Good to see *Jeff Hawke* back again. I look forward to the upcoming Star Wars interviews.  
... E. J. Sheeky, Stratford  
... I'd like to see in future issues *UFO* and *Fireball XL5*.

... John Wetton, Chadeemoor  
... more on *Space 1999*, *Dr. Who* (the longest running tv sf series in the world), *Blake's 7*, *Lost in Space* and *Time Tunnel*. Keep up the good work.  
... F. Dean, Stockton

... SB1 was great, SB2 was better. No more Star Trek stuff unless it's new. Perhaps a feature on *UFO*, *Night Gallery* or *Dark Star*?  
... Mark Finch, Little Eversden  
... after gradually ploughing through Starburst 1 (and desperately trying not to fall asleep), I was literally stunned with issue 2! I really loved the visuals on *Spiderman*, *Space Cruiser*, *Wizards* and *Close Encounters*.

... Matt Walton, Hampton  
... thoroughly enjoyed issue 2. No mistakes this time which shows Britain can produce an sf mag on par with America's *Starlog* magazine. Incidentally, I doubt that the *Spiderman* film can be spoiled by "unfamily" elements—in fact *Spider*'s most popular stories dealt with the drug scene in America, and were printed without approval of the Comics Code. One other thing, in your *Prisoner* article you say that "Fall Out" was the last episode. Well it was—and it wasn't! It was planned to end the series, but in America the final episode was called "Living in Harmony", written and directed by David Tomblin.

... Brian Longstaff, Sheffield  
Answers time: You may have thought and heard that the drug issues of *Spiderman* were the most popular, Brian, but they didn't prove to be the best sellers. That's what counts. *Spiderman* aims at the younger mass audiences in America. Hence the character *Joe* appearing in half a dozen comics per month, and his face on the Marvel cover logo.

Also, don't believe everything you read! The *Prisoner* episode, "Living in Harmony" was certainly not meant to be the last one. The original story was penned by a very good friend of mine, Ian Raloff (with its title, as an in-joke, coming from an old Two-Gun Kid comic), and was aired before the two-part tie-up, if it was screened as the final show somewhere, that was a screw-up on somebody's part.

... an article on the changes, from Melas A Trip To The Moon through to Star Wars, plus the changes in techniques. ... Salama Mohamed, London  
... I liked best the interview with Tony Daniels. More on Star Trek. ... Marc Bailey, Croydon  
... less comic strips and more articles on past tv and films, beginning with John Carpenter's *Dark Star*, which I believe is far superior to Star Wars in humour, ideas and the development of its characters. Your magazine is a fine addition to the genre and deserves success. ... Costar Vroodu, Southgate

... in issue 1, you mentioned how no-one knew who gave Gene Roddenberry his nickname "The Great Bird of the Galaxy". It was in fact Herb Solow who took the name from a line of Sulu's in the "Man Trap". It was meant to be a humorous blessing "May the great bird of the galaxy roost on your planet", with Roddenberry writing this line himself. After Herb Solow calling Gene this, the name stuck. Outside of this, and the terrible errors in captioning the pictures, I thought the magazine was good reading, especially the *Things to Come* column, and I look forward to the next issue.  
... Miss Wendy Richards, Canvey Is.  
Wandy takes our award as the "trekker of the issue". We were lauded with venomous, spiteful letters from *Trak* fans for our bad captioning in issue 1's *Star Trek* feature. But Wandy was the only one who (a) bothered to point out... knew? ... the "Great Bird" origin, and (b) commented on the rest of the magazine. It's sad to see the aptly-named *Trek*ies prefer to be destructive. The *Trak* fan is our office who did the captioning has, nonetheless, had his shore-leave privileges removed for six months.

... I have only one comment to make, and that is that I think all the letters you're going to publish are fakes, including this one.  
... Simon Cunliffe, Hammersmith  
That does it. Enough capsule comments. Let's move on to some deeper reading...

Unlike the other magazines you edit, *Med and House of Hammer*, Starburst has started into an over-drawn field for which it clearly cannot surely remain. It didn't start before, or after, but at the same time as a huge wave of "Star Wars Bandwagons".

# LETTERS

But this is to detract from the magazine. Never have I been so enthralled with a premiere issue. It's slick, well composed and extremely professional. But I'll cut the accolades, because I'm convinced you'll get far more intense and glowing acclaim (all most richly deserved) and instead relate immediately to my point of concern.

Television is chewing gum for the eyes, comics I enjoy... but the cinema is where I'm at! I am however more than perturbed by your reviews. Suspicion was aroused with issue one, but your second issue really had its faults. Having not yet seen *Close Encounters*, I cannot comment with any authority, but surely Ray Bradbury is not to be believed in his review.

He sounds more like a 13 year old than a leading author, reading into the movie messages which just aren't there. He has obviously walked straight out of the cinema and written his review with Trumbull wizardry still flashing in his bemused mind. He has been paid by Columbia to do a "snow-job" or is he just trying to show as how clever he can be? Hope and energy based not on the lovely Polynesian Optimism, but on the practicality of genetics in ferment... Precocious Bull!

John Frankish, Cowley

A reply would seem in order. Do *Close Encounters*, it is amazing, John, and with more than one religious statement to make. While Bradbury's opinions are purely personal, I'd suggest you see it before assuming "messages which just aren't there".

Thanks for writing though. We prefer criticism (whether we agree with it or not) to silence.

You may be interested in an anthology I've just finished putting together for Sphere Books under the title *Superheroes* (you guessed it, a collection of superhero stories). There are 13 stories, including "Stuporman"—a Superman parody by Robert Bloch, and such comics-inspired yarns as "The Alchemic Menace of the Polarizer" by George Alec Effinger, "Origin of a Superhero" by Don Glut and "It's a Bird, It's a Plane!" by Norman Spinrad. I've also included "Men of Steel, Women of Kleaner"—Larry Niven's amusing story of Superman's sex life (or lack of it). The book is due out here in June.

Michael Perry, Brentford

Ever get the feeling your magazine's just been used for free ads?

Starburst is an excellent idea and much better than any of the rival publications (*Starforce*, *Specs Wars* etc) that seem to have sprung up. Glad to see you've got Chris Wicking on your writing team. The magazine should make a worthy companion to *House of Hammer*.

I was glad to see this *House of Hammer* counterpart on sale, it makes a change to see a sci-fi mag that deals intelligently with the subject, and doesn't resort to the formulae articles on *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, etc.

The Prisoner article was particularly welcomed, as very little seems to have been printed about this enigma of a series. It was a terrific programme, as each episode left one with a sense of satisfaction, although I make no claim to being able to understand it.

The Tony Daniels interview was interesting too, even if he did spend most of it complaining about the suit. Over the next few issues, I'd like to see an article about the special effects of *Star Wars*, as the only one I've seen was in one of those other of mags you were so quick to knock. That *Specs Cruiser* poster was a knockout.

It's about time we had a decent Science Fiction mag. *Starburst*, a thinking man's poster mag!

Steve Noble, Bristol

You asked for opinions on *The Prisoner*.

While it's admitted that Alan Grece's article on *The Prisoner* (Starburst 2) is only his "interpretation", I do feel that his final judgment, "fun as well as stimulating", is a little lightweight, as indeed is his whole article, satirizing itself with the simplest symbolism and esoteric allegory.

To do *The Prisoner* justice you must view it as an ongoing situation. What else can its present syndication at peak-viewing time in the States merit?

There isn't ever going to be a definitive meaning, a final answer to *The Prisoner*. The entire series is designed to make you question, question yourself.

Like Samuel Beckett propounds, there is no answer. Godot never comes. But tension, the questioning tension of whether he will, of whether *The Prisoner* has a finite solution, is so stimulating. You are likely to work very hard at an examination and pass it. If you believe you are uncertain of whether you will pass or fail, if you think either result is certain, you may well slacken your efforts—as candidates and voters in safe seats, or the defenders of forlorn hopes, are apt to do. We must never feel certain that we have cracked *The Prisoner* code. There is ever code upon code.

We must keep on questioning. If we can keep on getting *The Prisoner* rescreened, more people will question and we will question more.

Everyone in talking about *The Prisoner* is echoing the word "think"—"The Prisoner makes you think". But "think" is a useless meaningless word on its own. You have to think of or about something. The key word is "question". *The Prisoner* doesn't make you think (i.e. embark on some self-induced pursuit of nirvana), it makes you question. Question what it all means, from the penny-farthing bicycle on the advance publicity to the closing sequence being a repetition on the opening sequence. Question your own conclusions. Compare them with others. Question the difference ("think the difference" means nothing). Question every opinion you've read. Question everything I've said so far. Question whether we should be questioning *The Prisoner* at all. Take the process out into life. Question life. Accept nothing. Reject everything. Question whether you should question life. Question whether you can. Question whether you want to.

It's too easy just to think you're questioning... John Rogers, Welford

Starburst 2 is my first encounter with your excellent magazine (a first encounter of the beneficial kind, as far as I'm concerned!). There seems to be a surfeit of what you aptly described as "hastily-assembled riff-offs" on the market and frankly your publication stand head and shoulders above them. The success of a certain movie has, of course, prompted this inflow... just as "Jaws" and the diastrophes "Kong" remake spawned glossy riff-offs that served no purpose other than to make a few bob for their "creators".

The Bradbury critique of Spielberg's movie was a curious piece, written by one of my favourite all-time authors. But his word is good enough for me, and when the film eventually opens here, I'll be near the head of the queue, if not leading it! I've not seen *Star Wars* yet, but if it was down to a choice of the two biggies of '78, then I'd give *Wars* a miss. No doubt future issues of your mag will give us a look behind the scenes of *Encounters*?

The Prisoner. I can remember watching that in 1968. The morning after, there'd be heated discussions at work... most people loathed it, but a small hard-core of fans would defend it! It was great for '68 and I'd love to have a second look ten years on. It made a tremendous change to the usual British tv format

of tired Monty Berman and Dennis Spooner "thrillers" such as *The Saint* and *The Baron*. Can you imagine a cult building up for those shows?

On the debit side, I'm not too keen on the comics. Don't get me wrong, though I'm knocking on thirty, I still like to read the occasional comic... but if I wanted comics I'd buy them.

In closing I'd like to wish you the very best of luck in the future. We need a British magazine of this quality covering the genre to equal *Cinefantastique*.

Alan Wightman, Newport

I have just picked up the first issue of your new magazine, *Starburst*. I'm delighted that "science fantasy" is at least getting a shot in the arm. In the past there has been, generally, a marked border between some genres—genres which are in fact no more than sub-genres of fantasy. Science fiction usually tries to divorce itself entirely from fantasy (especially "heroic fantasy" or "swords and sorcery") and also from horror, which it often looks down on as a juvenile brother. I haven't seen George Lucas' *Star Wars* yet, but I've read the paperback and seen dozens of stills and articles—so I can see exactly what George Lucas has done with his film. His concept of blending genres is one which I welcome with open arms! I say this because I am a writer, and I've attempted to break down some of the superficial barriers in books of my own, particularly a heroic fantasy trilogy, *The Dream Lords*, published in the US prior to release of *Star Wars*.

The sub-heading of *Starburst* is "Science Fantasy in Television, Cinema and Comic"—providing you with plenty of scope, and as you say rightly in your editorial, throwing light on a largely ignored topic.

Adrian Cole, Bideford

Issue No. 2 was much better than issue No. 1—as its contents were far more varied. I especially liked the article on *The Prisoner*, and I also found the *Things to Come* news section most interesting and informative.

I do not like comic strips much. I suppose Jeff Hawke is just about acceptable, if somewhat dated, but "The Visitor" was just a waste of three pages.

However, apart from that, all in all a reasonable 50p worth, and as I said at the start of these comments, improving. Keep this up and I shall continue to buy it.

C. E. Faulkner-King, Wood Green

First of all let me congratulate you on *Starburst*. I am an old writer (one of the sub-microscopic variety as opposed to *The Giants*) and your publication can do nothing but boost interest in the field from which a good deal of my bread is garnered.

Currently I am working on a non-fiction book for the publishers David & Charles. The subject is that of possible human reaction to contact with Extraterrestrial Intelligence (ETI).

One aspect of the book which might interest you is a look at the attitudes in TV, cinema and comics regarding ETU-encounter. I will be putting forward a plea for some responsibility in this area. The Spielberg movie *Close Encounters* has surely led to rest the obsessive attitude amongst the mogels that if must be violent to be interesting.

Chris Boyce, Glasgow

... and so ends our first letters column! Reactions are more than welcome. On the yes/no to comics, you'll find we've dropped them all this issue, but they'll be back in a totally different form next time. In the interim period, anybody got a good title for our letters page?

... Dez

# A History of Science Fiction Films

Feature by John Brosnan

**S**tar Wars, apart from its phenomenal success, is a special science fiction film in another way—it's one of the few *space opera* movies ever made. There's always been a wide gulf between written sf and sf films...this is best reflected by the fact that space opera—pure adventure stories with exotic interplanetary settings—has constituted a major part of written sf since the 1930s but has rarely been transferred to the screen. The most obvious reason is money—such films require elaborate special effects and are thus very expensive to produce, but then Hollywood has always been making expensive movies (you could make three *Star Wars* for the money it cost to make *Cleopatra*).

The real reason is that space opera,



and science fiction in general, has had to wait for the mass audience to catch up with it. For many years sf, in the minds of both cinema audiences and film makers, had been synonymous with mad scientists, monsters and invasions from outer space and when an sf film appeared that didn't contain any of these ingredients it usually, with a few rare exceptions, failed at the box office.

It wasn't really until the 1960s that the mass audience was prepared to accept some of the more traditional concepts of written sf. Whereas the sf reader of the 1930s and '40s took for granted the possibility of space travel and could thus accept a story set entirely in another galaxy it took the actual moon landing to enable the



**Facing page:** One of the highly imaginative sets from the 007 film, *You Only Live Twice* (1967). John Stear's special effects at their peak, as *SPECTRE* seeks to start World War III by having a huge space craft swallow up both US and Russian space capsules. The scene shown is the *SPECTRE* giant missile-launching base, deep in a volcano. **Above:** *Silent Running* (1971, Universal) featured the last plants from Earth aboard a huge space ship. When orders come to abort the ship, destroying the plants, Bruce Dern (pictured above, driving through the ship's lower levels) takes control with the help of his R2-D2 like 'droids' to save the flora. **Above top:** A Lunar landing from George Pal's 1950 *Destination Moon*, based on Robert Heinlein's "Rocket Ship Galileo".







Top: A scene from the "realistic" s-f film, *Marooned* (1969) concerning a manned, stranded spacecraft, and the attempts to rescue it. Above: James Caan stars as the hero of millions in the futuristic film, *Rollerball* (1975) which takes sport to its ultimate limit, with the teams literally giving their lives to win the game. Facing page: Gene Autry clashes with the rebel army in *Phantom Empire* (1935, 12-episode serial).



general public to reach the same point. It's amusing that some mainstream film critics have observed, almost with awe, that in *Star Wars* the "...Earth isn't even mentioned once!" Gee, what will they think of next!

The gulf between written sf and sf movies existed almost from the beginning of the cinema itself. Whereas writers like Jules Verne and H. G. Wells had been writing about the subject of space travel quite seriously for many years one of the first films about it naturally used it as the basis of a series of jokes.

This was *A Trip to the Moon*, made in 1902 by the famous French film pioneer Georges Melies, which had a group of explorers being fired at the moon from a gun (their projectile is loaded into the cannon by a line of chorus girls). On the lunar surface they barely have time to encounter some moon men, who have a tendency to explode when tapped with an umbrella, before being pulled back to Earth by "the force of gravity". Also played for laughs was Melies' 1904 film *An Impossible Voyage* which had a high-speed train taking off from the summit of a mountain and travelling through space before landing in the sea. But Melies was basically a showman out to make purely amusing trick films and one can't blame him for not treating the work of both Verne and Wells seriously. It wasn't until 1916 that Verne received a more ambitious treatment of his work on the screen, which was when an American film maker called Stuart Paton made an eleven-reel long version of *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (it even contained some actual underwater photography—causing a minor sensation at the time).

Wells had to wait until 1919 when a British company made *First Men in the Moon* which was directed by J. V. Leigh and apparently embellished Wells' story by adding a triangular love interest to the proceedings (the author's reactions to the film are not on record).

Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* can be defined as science fiction in that it's one of the first books to suggest that man's attempts through technology (though in the book Frankenstein's methods have more in common with alchemy than science) to challenge natural law (or God) will probably result in a lot of trouble for all concerned—and it is a theme that's been repeated in many sf films since then, usually summed up with the line:

"There are Some Things Man was Not Meant to Know..." as the evil invention explodes, crawls, totters, disintegrates or sinks into oblivion, often taking its unhappy inventor with it.

1910 saw the first film version of *Frankenstein*—a more or less straight adaption within the confines of its mere 975 foot length—directed by J. Searle Dawley and starring Charles Ogle as the monster (the film was believed to have been lost completely but a print has recently been discovered). The same theme was used in the 1916 German serial *Homunculus*, directed by Otto Rippert, which was about an artificial man created by

cerned a group of Soviet astronauts who travel to Mars where they find the mass of the population living under an oppressive regime. Naturally, like good Russians should, they help the Martians to overthrow their rulers and assist in the setting up of a communist government on Mars.

But it was in Germany that the most famous sf film of the 1920s was made, that being *Metropolis* directed by Fritz Lang in 1926 about a vast city of the future whose workers are led into a misguided rebellion by an evil robot disguised as a beautiful woman. This was the most ambitious sf film made to that date with huge sets and



a scientist trying to make a creature of "pure reason". But the android resents his lack of true humanity, becomes the dictator of a large country and then attempts to conquer the world but is destroyed by a convenient bolt of lightning.

French contributions to science fiction in this period included *The Madness of Doctor Tubel* directed by Abel Gance in 1915, which was about a scientist who goes insane while experimenting with light waves, and *Paris Qui Dort*, directed by Rene Clair in 1923, about a scientist who accidentally freezes all of Paris into a split second of time. And in 1924 the Russians made *Aelita* which con-

lavish special effects. Fritz Lang, who had also made *Doctor Mabuse, Der Spieler* in 1922 about an evil genius seeking world conquest, made another foray into science fiction in 1929 with *Woman in the Moon*. This was probably the first realistic attempt to depict space travel on the screen but though the preparations for the building of the rocket and actual take-off were convincing (German rocket experts Hermann Oberth and Willy Ley were the technical advisers) the film became a disappointment once the explorers reached the moon. Lack of air and the differences in gravity and temperatures were conveniently ignored as the explorers ambled about a lunar land-



scape that resembled the Swiss Alps. . .

The early to mid-1930s saw something of a boom in science fiction and science fiction-related movies. In America there were such films as *Just Imagine* (1930), *Frankenstein* (1931), *The Island of Lost Souls* (1932), *Deluge* (1933), *King Kong* (1933) and *The Invisible Man* (1933), while in Germany there was *Der Tunnel* (1933), *FPI Does Not Answer* and *Gold* (1933) and England saw the making of *The Trans-Atlantic Tunnel* (1935), *The Man Who Could Work Miracles* (1936) and *Things to Come* (1936). The fact that H. G. Wells wrote most of his best science fiction stories and novels before the turn of the century yet it wasn't until the 1930s that his work reached the screen (with the exception of the 1919 version of *First Men on the Moon*) emphasizes the point about the gulf/time lapse that has always existed between written and filmed sf.

Actually Wells was fortunate in the high quality of the films based on his work during this period—*The Invisible Man*, directed by James Whale, was jokey but kept to the spirit of the original, as did *The Island of Lost Souls* (based on the book *The Island of*

Above: *Moon Zero 2* (1969, Hammer) was the first "space western", spoilt by humour and limited budget. Set in 2021, it starred James Olson and Catherin (Space 1999)

Schell. Facing page: In the 23rd Century, writer/producer/director John Boorman tells us Extremators will worship Zardoz and be given guns to destroy their enemies. Star Sean Connery (as Zed) creates havoc unwinding the truth behind the myth. Below: *Master of Terror/The 4-D Man* are alternative titles for this 1959 movie starring Robert Lansing as an almost vampiric character who can pass through solid matter. If the 'solid matter' is a person, they die of old age, transferring their youth to him.

*Dr Moreau*) directed by Erle C. Kenton. Particularly good was *The Man Who Could Work Miracles*, directed by Lothar Mendes from Wells's own cynical and witty screenplay. Probably the least satisfying of the Wells films of that period is *Things to Come*, despite it being the most ambitious and the one film that Wells was involved in right from the very beginning (first writing the treatment based on his book *The Shape of Things to Come*, and then the screenplay).

*Things to Come*, directed by Cameron Manziess, covers a period in history from the mid-1930s to a hundred years in the future, during which time a long-running war (prophetically starting in 1940) reduces most of the world to chaos before a group of clean-limbed scientists take over and build a vast new city of gleaming whiteness—a utopia on Earth. The film ends with an attempt to fire a manned projectile





at the moon despite the objections of a horde of effete "artists" who are still insisting that there are Things That Man was Not Meant to Know. Seen today it's an often boring film for all the lavish sets and special effects (the latter really aren't that impressive) and the reason is that by the 1930s Wells had changed from being an incredibly innovative and inventive writer to a pretentious preacher.

As a result *Things to Come* is basically a long and expensive sermon. And the sermon itself—that only scientists hold the key to a sane way of life—is not one that holds much appeal today, especially since the city they build in the film has all the plastic appeal of a modern shopping complex.

*Things to Come* was a critical success at the time but not a financial one, which obviously influenced other film makers against producing other big-budget sf epics in the years that followed. Incidentally, the other big sf film of the 1930s, *Just Imagine*, was also a financial failure—a fate it certainly deserved though it's more fair to describe it as a bad musical comedy

than a bad sf film. Despite being set in a futuristic New York its science fiction elements are just used as a background for a trite love story, some bad jokes and some even worse musical numbers.

Science fiction movies more or less faded away by the end of the 1930s, existing only in the form of the "mad scientist" variety of story, such as *The Invisible Ray* (1936), *Devil Doll* (1936) and *The Man They Could Not Hang* (1939).

Best of these was *Dr Cyclops* made in 1939 by Ernest B. Schoedsack (co-director of *King Kong*) which was about an evil scientist, played with malignant glee by Albert Dekker, who shrinks a group of people down to an average height of twelve inches and then plays a deadly cat-and-mouse game with them.

The nearest thing to written sf in the late 1930s however was to be found in the serials where Flash Gordon and friends were to be seen rattling around the universe in cardboard spaceships barely supported by the almost non-existent budgets. Though actually based on comic strips the serials were the first to capture some of the authentic flavour of pulp magazine science fiction.

The 1940s were almost entirely lacking in sf films except for the mad scientist pot-boilers (usually starring Boris Karloff) and the Invisible Man series that started with *The Invisible Man Returns* in 1940 and continued until 1944.

It wasn't until 1950 that the really big science fiction film boom began, and it's a boom that's still going on...

There were several reasons for the boom—a combination of many factors that suddenly came together all at once and ignited a whole new trend in the cinema. The three main ingredients, or themes, of sf films in the 1950s consisted of space travel, paranoia about "them" and anxiety about the Bomb and its effects. Space travel had become a possibility to the general public due to the Second World War—when V2 missiles started crashing down on London it suddenly meant that the men who played around with rockets weren't just harmless cranks but cranks of an entirely different nature, and if a rocket could travel from country to country one might conceivably reach the moon.

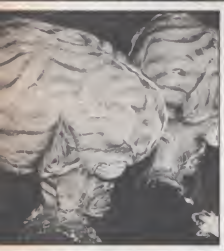
As for the paranoia—that came from two different sources; one was rooted in the fear of communist subversion and the other was an actual fear of invasion from Out There because, one must remember, this was the period of the great flying saucer scare which had started in 1947. Thus there wasn't much step between making a film called *I Married a Communist* to one called *I Married a Monster from Outer Space* (unfortunately, the next logical step—I Married a Communist Monster from Outer Space—was never taken).

As for the Bomb, Hiroshima had proven to even the least imaginative person that atomic bombs could prove hazardous to one's health. A few films were made during the 1950s that were set in a post-atomic war world, such as *Five, The World, the Flesh and the Devil* and *On the Beach*. But generally sf films treated the Bomb indirectly in that they used atomic radiation as a catalyst for the events in their stories. During the 1950s atomic radiation was responsible for many different types of phenomenon on the screen—it shrunk people, it made them large, it made them as hard as steel, it disturbed prehistoric animals, it made insects grow in size, it attracted aliens from outer space and so on, but very rarely did it actually make anyone radioactive.



Above: Nic Roeg's *The Man Who Fell To Earth* (1975) starred David Bowie as a 'Dune-like' alien in search of a source of water for his dying family. Above right: *The Man From Planet X* (1950) featured an alien becoming hostile when faced with evil humans. The device in his right hand is a 'mind-controlling ray'. Right: The bizarre little green men from Mars (*Invasion of the Hell Creatures*, 1957) with alcohol in their veins which they inject into people via hypodermic nails (remember, not all sf is good sf). Below: *The Phantom Planet* (1961) is a world flown by its inhabitants like a spaceship. Tiny by our standards, but able to shrink humans down to its people's own size. Far Right: From the 1972 Russian film, on the planet *Solaris*. The planet is covered in living ooze, which is able to materialize people from the memories of the station inhabitants.





The years between 1950 and 1954 were rich ones for sf films and by 1954 all the major trends had been established that were to be repeated again and again throughout the rest of the decade. George Pal's **Destination Moon** led the way into space in 1950, and in 1951 **The Thing from Another World** led the way from the other direction. In the same year **The Day the Earth Stood Still** brought the first of the friendly aliens from outer space while **War of the Worlds** in 1953 was the first of the large-scale alien invasion.

Also in 1953 came **The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms**, the first of the prehistoric creatures to rise up from the past and stomp on some unsuspecting city. Back in 1951 Five set the trend for "What to talk about after the Bomb" movies, a genre that reached its low with a number of Roger Corman "Z" movies in the late 1950s.

ligent aliens and grotesque mutants.

But the film that came the closest to putting superior space opera on the screen was **Forbidden Planet** made in 1956. Among its assets were a fine cast, good sets and top quality special effects (the sequences showing the vast remains of the Krel civilisation convey a genuine sense of wonder all too rare in sf cinema) but most importantly it took for granted the audience's acceptance of its futuristic setting. It didn't try to spell things out by having the characters lecturing each other about what had been going on back on Earth since 1956 or what gadget did what, but followed the written sf tradition of letting the background speak for itself. It really was one of the first sf movies to treat both its subjects and its audience without condescension. The credit for this breakthrough must go to both script writer Cyril Hume



An awful lot of bad sf films were made during the 1950s, particularly in the latter half of the decade when both originality and budgets went into a decline but overall the period saw the making of many memorable films—such as **It Came From Outer Space**, **When Worlds Collide**, **Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea**, **Them!**, **The Incredible Shrinking Man**, **Invasion of the Body Snatchers**, **The Quatermass Experiment** and even **Earth vs The Flying Saucers**.

However very few sf films reflected what was going on, or what *had* been going on, in written sf. One exception was **This Island Earth** (1955) which was almost pure pulp sf of the 1940s, was based on a potboiler sf novel by Raymond F. Jones and featured all the paraphernalia familiar to sf readers such as giant spaceships, dying planets, interplanetary warfare, super-intel-

and director Fred McLeod Wilcox. **Forbidden Planet** made money for MGM but unfortunately its success wasn't sufficient to persuade other movie makers to produce similar sf films and as a result space opera became completely neglected until recently.

The major new trend with sf films in the 1960s was that the subjects became much more diversified as movie makers began to get away from the sf-as-horror syndrome that was so dominant in the '50s. The 1960s saw the making of such superior sf films as **The Time Machine**, **Village of the Damned**, **The Day the Earth Caught Fire**, **Dr Strangelove**, **Robinson Crusoe on Mars**, **Fantastic Voyage**, **The Power, The Illustrated Man**, **Marooned**, **Fahrenheit 451**, **First Men in the Moon**, **The Forbin Project** and, of course, **2001 A Space Odyssey**, Stanley Kubrick's lavish

space epic which was also an ironical allegory about the nature of human intelligence and man's relationship with his technological toys. 2001 also set a new standard for special effects—a

*Andromeda Strain*, *The Omega Man*, *Sleeper*, *Slaughterhouse Five*, *The Terminal Man*, *The Stepford Wives*, *Dark Star*, *Soylent Green* and *The Man Who Fell to Earth* were made.



Above: *The Myserians* are alien invaders who land in Japan seeking women for breeding purposes. Toho Studios, 1957.

standard which hadn't been matched until *Star Wars*.

The early 1970s saw a continuation of this diversifying of subjects chosen for sf films and such unlike films as *Zardoz*, *Westworld*, *Rollerball*, *The*

But by the mid-1970s it slowly became evident that we were entering another major sf boom because all of a sudden all of the big film companies were simultaneously announcing plans for sf productions. The reasons

for this, unlike the boom of the 1950s, are not yet clear. Its possible that a couple of the Hollywood producers decided that sf was going to be the next big box office bonanza after the disaster film cycle and the other companies decided to jump quickly on the band-wagon—even before it had really started to move. But whatever the reason it looked as if it was going to be a very short-lived boom when its first products began to appear on the screen—films like *Futureworld*, *Food of the Gods* and the terrible *Logan's Run*. Then came *Star Wars* and everything suddenly changed.

Made by George Lucas, a man familiar with the traditions of written sf (he had, as mentioned elsewhere this issue, made the excellent sf film *THX 1138*) *Star Wars* is one of the first sf films to incorporate many of the elements of the genre that have been so long ignored by other film makers.

*Star Wars* may be familiar to sf readers as far as its plot is concerned but in terms of film making its a major break-through and its financial success bodes well for the future of science fiction in the cinema. ■

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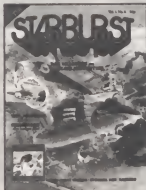
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# LOGAN'S RUN

By way of bizarre coincidence, since finishing *STARBURST 2*, we've received *four* different reviews of tv's spin-off *Logan's Run* series. All are by regular contributors, so rather than give you just one man's view, try them all, and then let's hear how you feel.

## FOLLOW THE LOSER

by Sam E. Dell

Visual sci-fi must surely be at its peak on the wide screen. There's *Star Wars* still on the boil as the industry's biggest-ever box office smash hit. *Close Encounters* catching up fast, *Superman* (more expensive than the previous two put together) ready in the wings for take-off, and *Star Trek* moving into production as a major feature film. Plus the countless cash-ins destined to swamp us in '79.

Terrific. Just what the industry needs to bring life back into movies, and get us out of the last depressive vogue of sadism, extreme violence, sex and gore.

But the small screen continues to plod. Given sci-fi as a new alternative to cops, the major production networks still give us re-hashed *Wagon Train* episodes and inferior super-heroes.

In the latter category, we've had to endure *The Gemini Man*, *Man From Atlantis*, *Lucan*, and the more successful bionic team. In the former, *Star Trek* (the first and most inspired), *Planet of the Apes*, *Fantastic Journey* and now *Logan's Run*.

As an interesting believe-it-or-not anecdote, have you ever wondered why the female spin-off from *The Six Million Dollar Man* wasn't titled *The Six Million Dollar Woman*? It appears the network executives felt poor Lindsey Wagner would sound like the world's most expensive call girl.

That may seem irrelevant, but it just about sums up the small-minded attitudes of those who rule.

When *Planet of the Apes* tv series flopped, the replacement we eventually saw was *Fantastic Journey*. To give it a better chance than its predecessors, the script editor chosen was D. C. Fontana (off-time contributor to *Star Trek*). And, as a boost, Roddy McDowell was brought in as a main star (lead actor—beneath his monkey mask—in the *Planet of the Apes* tv series).

When *Fantastic Journey* flopped, the executives looked around for another source of inspiration. And discovered... *Logan's Run*. Sure, it had been a great book, but a terrible film. Distorted to fit the screen, with the

introduction of Carousel, age limit up from 21 to 30, and a team of contributors who admitted total ignorance of sci-fi. What a natural for a tv series. Someone even had the yet more inspired idea of using any left-over scripts from *Fantastic Journey* for the new show. With D. C. Fontana as the new show's script editor, she'd soon knock them into shape.

*Logan's Run* tv series flopped on the ratings. So it goes.

and are now trying to dent the forces of the wicked powers.

Despite the high hopes of producer David Maloney ("Everything that happens, every situation, every set, must be accepted as being possible, if not probable"), the series is not too far removed from the playpen sets and shaky production of *Doctor Who*. There also seems to be a slight allusion to the *Star Trek* mood and setting, but by being a BBC-TV studio production the show is doomed to pantomime backgrounds and theatrical portrayals.

Within its own sphere, there is really nothing wrong with the *Doctor Who* series—the absurdity arises when *Blake's 7* tries hard *not* to be on the same production-level as *Doctor Who*!

Creator and solo writer Terry Nation's scripts are, on some consideration, not really too bad—the ideas and intentions are actually quite good, but the series should have been written for production on film rather than the limitations of video, and static camerawork.

Another *Star Trek* it isn't—another *Doctor Who* it could be.

*Logan's Run* fares somewhat better, but that's only in comparison. Like *Blake's 7* the *Logan's Run* pilot also crammed a lot of the story-so-far into its 75 minute segment (with liberal splashes of the feature film footage).

Granted it's trying to work on the strength



Rem (Donald Moffat), Jessica (Heather Menzies) and Logan (Gregory Harrison), no longer running in search of "Sanctuary", but from Francis and his Sandmen.

## LOGAN vs. BLAKE

by This Vahimagi

With *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters* domineering the big-screen science-fiction interest, the small-screen world of Television launched the new year with a couple of science-fiction projects of its own. ITV telecast the *Logan's Run* pilot three weeks (in the London area) after the BBC premiered their new *Blake's 7* series. There is no apparent sense of competition here between the two TV organisations—both are merely joining the current phase of sci-fi popularity.

*Blake's 7* is very much a simple story; the bad guys are in control of a large sector of the galaxy, and the good guys have broken free

of the movie-version, but as that wasn't a big success in any department where does the series go from here?

*Logan's Run* has already been cancelled from the TV schedules in America, so British viewers are, in effect, currently watching a "ghost", a doomed project.

Here we have a reverse situation from *Blake's 7*—*Logan's Run* scripts are terrible yet the special effects are very good, and the production goes out into real sunlight and shoots the whole thing on film. A particularly disappointing factor is that Dorothy Fontana is (or rather, was) the show's story-editor. Fontana, as most buffs may recall, showed great promise when working with Gene Roddenberry back in the *Star Trek* days, but in

recent years seems to have burnt herself out in the creative-writing department.

The *Logan's Run* premise, as a tele-series, was so open-ended, allowing for every dramatic possibility to come along, that it ends up in a similar position to a man stuck in the middle of a vast maze.

*Logan's Run* is, perhaps, preferable to Blake's 7—but then, madness is preferable to smugness.

## LOGAN'S DONE

by Tony Crawley

Too much luck about the all too rapid demise of *Logan's Run*, tv version. Cut off in its prime-time . . . as just another example

the result of a 13-week study by the National Citizens' Committee for Broadcasting in Washington. They felt *Logan's Run*, *Man From Atlantis*, *Wonder Woman* and Jimmy Sangster's *Young Dan'l Boone* were as violent as Francis Coppola's nine-hour TV re-edited version of *The Godfather*!

Which must have been news to CBS. That wasn't the reason they killed off *Logan*.

Truth to tell, CBS never gave the show a chance. The network showed with absurd glee that here was the most expensive TV series yet made, with episodic budgets of up to \$450,000. (The six-million dollar bionic pair come in at around \$370,000 a throw—each.) The actual *Logan* pilot show cost as high as \$850,000—

works. . . . The US shows are usually juvenile enough to appeal to children, but they tend to require an elder around in case of monsters (a la Dr. Who); the elders always get hooked on anything even slightly reminiscent of *Star Trek* and they make sure the kids never miss an episode—because they'd feel embarrassed watching it alone. No kidding!

In the States, though, such shows are put out in the evening—8pm or 9pm. Such is US network poor thinking.

That's not all. "Unfortunately the networks shy away from originality," says Ivan Goff. "They lack the nerve to go out on a limb. . . . There are no gamblers or showmen in the networks."

When *Logan* got chopped, producers Goff and Ben Roberts sent a memo to their cast and crew.

"*Logan*, Jessica and Rem were terminated yesterday. . . . The fragmentary reports left over by the ancients indicates a mysterious killer which roamed this part of the world in the 1950s, '60s and '70s. The ancients called it: *The Nielsen* (the US TV-ratings system). . . . Evidently, this invisible, mysterious monolithic mass murderer was worshipped by relatively few but its power was tremendous. We were right all along. . . . There is no sanctuary. . . . One cannot exist 'outside' for it is too dangerous. . . . End Transmission."

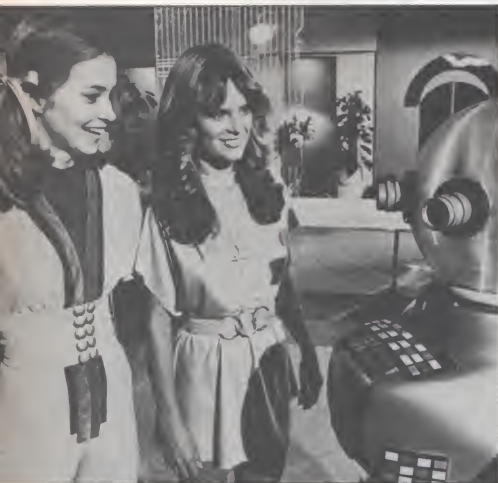
Then again, one really wonders what Messrs. Goff and Roberts—the creators of *Lana Turner* and *Doris Day* sob movies, of TV's *Mannix* and *Charlie's Angels*, were doing in charge of an sf show in the first place. . . . They were, at least, honest enough to call themselves sf novices. Too right! Their closest connection, for example, with the original *Logan's Run* was taking one of its wallpaper walk-on starlets and turning her into an overnight *Angels*' sensation: Farrah Fawcett Majors. They've an awful lot to make up for. . . .

## THE AMERICAN VIEW

Closing comments by our US correspondent, Bill George.

Tailored-for-TV science fiction is rarely memorable. What's the difference between *Space 1999*, Canada's *Starlost*, or even the *Planet of the Apes* TV shows? Practically nothing. These broadcasts abuse the genre as a *deus ex machina*, with the accoutrements of science fiction engaged as "cop-outs"—a laser ray or robot is introduced early on, and never mentioned again until the final reel, when the good guy puts it into operation as a convenient weapon. This same survival device is never (or rarely) retained for subsequent episodes—it was only (and conveniently) at the disposal of the heroes for one brief segment, a substitute for a well-written fade-out. Thus, sf on the tube can best be considered *deja vu*—we've seen it all before on other and similar shows.

Case in point: the *Logan's Run* tv series, adapted from the MGM movie, which was no blockbuster commercially or critically. Suffice to say, there are changes from the source of origination, but no improvements. The most conspicuous addition is Rem, an android authorized to provide comedy relief. In one episode, Rem kisses a "female" android (portrayed by a thoroughly wasted Mariette Hartley) and nearly shorts a circuit, with sparks literally flying. Three Stooges and Jerry Lewis addicts may approve, but serious sf fans should elect Harlan Ellison to drop a bomb over the



Above: From the Harlan Ellison penned episode, "The Crypt", in which Logan, Jessica and Rem meet a girl who had spent her entire life within the confines of an underground laboratory/bunker, never visiting the outside world, with only two robots as companions.

of the impossibility of making good telefantasy in Hollywood's Formula City. True, the series started off almost as badly as BBC-TV's cheapie *Blake's Seven*, but it was showing distinct potential by the time Harlan Ellison joined the writers for *The Crypt* story, better still with *Man Out of Time*.

The casting of the leads was poorly handled. But the guest shots (notably Paul Shenar's time-traveller in Gerrold's enjoyable yarn), and the last minute addition of Donald Moffat's continuing android, Rem, made up for the deadly all-American perfection of hero, heroine and pursuer.

And yet in the States, *Logan* was actually considered one of the five most violent prime-time shows on TV, believe it or not! This was

and CBS ruined any impact they might have had for openers in the ratings by screening the \$8,000,000 *Logan* feature film ten days beforehand!

Next, they continually switched the time-slots around when the ratings were shaky. It came on at different times and/or different days every week. As co-producer Ivan Goff rightly wails, "Could any show survive such treatment?"

Britain alone seems to understand the mystique in scheduling such near-sf product. London Weekend, for example, opened *Logan's Run* in the slot suddenly left gaping by the similarly American-axed *Man From Atlantis* . . . the family-viewing period of 5.30/6.30pm. Why family viewing? Well, it



writers of the show. Eventually, both androids fall in love. This may be very funny on shows that invite ancient satire and/or slapstick (including a much more imaginative *Lost in Space*), but hardly recommended for a show that pretends to take itself seriously. The same segment was heavily padded with pointless allusions to dreams and the Death Wish. But anything considered too cerebral—or anything that threatens to offer insight—is quickly put out to pasture. Important ideas were thrown away so that the “heart-warming” affair between the androids could resume at a merciless pace. Multiple-exposures were practically the only special effects required, and these were redundant “fillers” for the dream sequences.

Cardboard sets and the usual hardware are

painful reminders of the naive days of pioneer sf, where the villains were reduced to the flatness of school-yard pageantry.

Even the sinister force behind Carousel (an elite society that minimizes the population—anyone over 30 is exterminated) comes across with the impact of Halloween candy, thanks to listless direction and photography. Rarely has the viewer been so self-conscious of studio paint and props—an episode of *Logan's Run* can be compared to a tour of the Universal Studio backlot.

This reviewer's resistance to boredom has prevented him from watching *all* the episodes, but like most sf on tv, it's like yesterday's leftovers—pretty stale stuff the second (and third, and fourth . . .) time around.

I've already had my fill.

## LOGAN'S RUN

A MGM-TV Series. (Pilot premiered in U.S.: September 16, 1977.) Colour. 60 mins.

Producer: Leonard Katzman. Directors: Robert Day, Alex Singer, Irving J. Moore, Nick Colasanto. Story editor: D. C. Fontana. Writers: William F. Nolan, Saul David, David Gerrold, James Schmeerer, Michael Richards. Photo: Richard C. Glouner, Irving Lippman. Art directors: Preston Ames, Mort Rabinowitz. Music: Laurence Rosenthal. Cast: Gregory Harrison (*Logan*), Heather Menzies (*Jessica*), Donald Moffat (*Rem*), Randy Powell (*Francis*).

# CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

## BEHIND THE SCENES

Feature by John Brosnan



Not only is there a boom in science fiction films at the moment but there's also a boom in special effects. Most of the major films in recent years have depended on spectacular effects for their success—films such as *Earthquake*, *The Towering Inferno*, *Jaws*, *King Kong*, *Logan's Run*, *Star Wars* and, of course, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

This increasing reliance on special effects has meant that effects men in both the USA and Britain are experiencing an unusual period of full employment and also that major developments are being made in the creation of new visual effects techniques. However, there now exists a growing pressure on the effects men to *out-do* the special effects of each preceding film—and the main problem faced by the makers of *Close Encounters* was that they somehow had to top the visual effects in *Star Wars*. Most of the responsibility for achieving this fell to optical effects expert Douglas Trumbull.

Trumbull, of course, is already well-known for his work on *2001*, *Candy* and *The Andromeda Strain* and also for the sf film he directed himself, *Silent Running*. *Close Encounters* certainly presented him with some of the toughest challenges of his career to date and the optical effects alone eventually consumed 3½ million out of a total budget of 19 million dollars.

**"I turned down *Star Wars* because I felt it was just another space opera." — Douglas Trumbull.**

"I turned down *Star Wars*," said Trumbull, "because I felt it was just another space opera—just an extension of the stuff I'd already done in *2001* and *Silent Running*—and I was totally bored with that kind of thing. I liked *Close Encounters* because it was a totally different look with new kinds of effects."

"The hardest thing about this picture

was that we didn't have the advantage of being out in space creating a fantasy. We had to be down on Earth with totally believable illusions. But putting a UFO on the screen is like photographing God: people have a very abstract, mind's-eye view of what they expect to see in a flying saucer. So the general look we went for was one of motion, velocity, luminosity and brilliance. We used very sophisticated fibre optics and light-scanning techniques to modulate, control and colour light on film to create the appearance of a shape when in fact no-shape existed."

But Trumbull and his team did build some miniature UFOs as well. Powered by electronic motors that produced up to 12 simultaneous motions they moved on horizontal and vertical tracks in a blacked-out studio filled with smoke. "We made up a sort of an erector set kit a flying saucer kit—that was essentially just a flat circular disc with different tops and different bottoms in any combination, cone-shaped,



**Facing page:** The lonely vigil is rewarded as the cloudy storm and brilliant lights herald the coming of an alien ship. **Inset:** In panic, Jullian Guiler (Melinda Dillon) clutches her son (played by Carl Gaffey), as all electrical appliances go haywire and bright colours pierce the night sky, lighting up her home as the aliens land. **Above:** a scene cut from the finished film, in which Richard Dreyfuss, attempting to reach Devil's Tower and meet the off-worlders, is stopped short by panicking crowds.



pyramid-shaped, round oblate shaped, or very shallow disc shaped. Then we mixed and matched tops and bottoms to make anything we wanted. And these were all rigged with neon lighting systems inside and different kinds of holes and ports and openings. Then we had a system of fibreoptic light sources and scanners built in them which were remotely controllable. Then there were a few other oddball objects, like wing shapes, which were just big plexiglass boxes with neon on them."

**"Putting a UFO on screen is like photographing God."—Douglas Trumbull.**

Originally it had been planned to have a special effects sequence showing a flying saucer seeding the sky with thousands of little cuboids — small, glowing boxes that would zip and zoom all over the place acting like inquisitive animals — but the sequence proved too complicated to execute and was abandoned. However, one of the little objects does appear in the film—nicknamed the 'Red Whoosh' it's the small red object that follows the three larger



*Above: The brilliant Douglas Trumbull, whose superb photographic effects ability transferred to the screen Steven Spielberg's original concepts. Below: A behind-the-scenes shot of the filming of *Close Encounters*.*

saucers in the sequence where they're all chased along the road by the police cars and at the climax. One of the highlights of that chase sequence was the shot of the saucers passing straight *through* a toll-booth in the road. This was achieved by combining on film shots of a real, full-sized toll-booth with shots of a miniature set complete with model toll-booth and tiny UFOs running along rails.

Trumbull's other tasks included

**Trumbull is so proud of *Close Encounters* that he intends only to work on his own films in future.**

creating vast storm clouds in the sky that are supposedly caused by the passage of the gigantic "mothership"—which he did by pumping white poster paint in a tank of water and then matting the shots into footage of the actual scenery at 72 frames per second with a fibre optics light source inside the "cloud" to resemble the ship's lights.

Another complicated job was to create the illusion that every light in a large town was going out simultaneously



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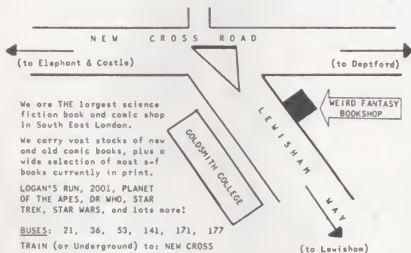
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and then coming back on again—which was achieved by blacking-out, by hand (on an animation stand), each and every houselight in the shot.

But Trumbull's biggest assignment was to show the landing of the giant mother ship, at the climax of the film. The original idea was simply that a large, black shape would come down through the clouds and block out the stars, then open up and emit an intense light from within. But then the director, Stephen Spielberg, decided he wanted the ship to look rather like an oil refinery at night—a sort of city of light. Sketches were made by Ralph McQuarrie and then Spielberg and Trumbull picked the one they liked best. Then Greg Jein, the film's chief model-maker, supervised the construction of



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the miniature along with Bob Shepherd, the Effects Unit Manager on the film. The finished model was six feet in diameter, weighed almost 400 pounds and was made of plexiglass, steel, plywood, fibreglass, thin aluminium tubes all carefully drilled with fine jewellers' drills, and enormous amounts of plastic model kit parts. It also contained a very complicated electrical system because each of the tubes—on average only an inch in diameter—had neon tubes running both up and down their lengths. The model was basically a maze of neon tubes and high-voltage wiring.

For the sequence showing the mother ship on the ground, and then opening up, a different model was used. This one consisted of a dome 8 feet in diameter on which was projected various light effects. A huge full-scale section was also used in this sequence and was filmed in an enormous hangar (pre-



viously used for blimps). The walls were draped in black velvet and a giant 100 foot wide, 38 foot high, screen was used for the front projection of the background sky and horizon (the whole sequence was supposed to be taking place outdoors). To help create the illusion of the wall of light surrounding the full-scale section that represented the base of the vast mother ship, Trumbull placed 2,000 flood lights and several large arc lamps along its edge. The final composite footage of the sequence, combining both model and full-scale section as well as various other image components, consisted of over 50 separate exposures on one piece of film.

Trumbull is so proud of his work on

**Close Encounters** that he has vowed never to work on anyone else's film doing special effects—instead he intends to make another film of his own. It will be an sf one, of course, entitled—**Brainstorm** (more on that next issue). One can only hope it will be an improvement on the technically brilliant but thematically absurd **Silent Running**.

**Close Encounters** also features some very spectacular mechanical (or physical) effects. These were handled by Roy Arbogast, who had previously worked with Spielberg on **Jaws**, and included the effects in such sequences as the one where we see total chaos within the interior of Richard Dreyfuss's truck when the UFO is hovering overhead. To achieve the various



**Top:** The first direct communication between terrans and extra-terrestrials is music. The second is colour. Notes play from the organ-like device, the now-famous five chords. Five corresponding colours flash up on the huge lights board behind. Then all wait for a response from the alien mother ship. **Centre:** Writer, director Steven Spielberg—described by many as a genius—meticulously following every detail in the production of his latest hit, which seems destined to top his last mammoth success, **Jaws**. **Bottom:** Two of the many scout ships hover above the specially-constructed landing strip, making final checks before the mother ship descends.





effects, like the explosion of objects from the glove-box and the phone dangling in mid-air at the end of its cord, the whole truck was mounted on a wheel on a huge rig and simply tilted backwards until it was vertical causing everything to fall out of the glove box at a totally disorientated Dreyfuss (the camera, of course, remained in a fixed position in the truck). And in the amusing sequence directly before, where Dreyfuss in his parked truck waves at the lights of a "car" behind him to pass by only to see the lights suddenly rise up into the air (it's actually a UFO)—that was done by mounting a set of lights on the boom of a mobile crane.

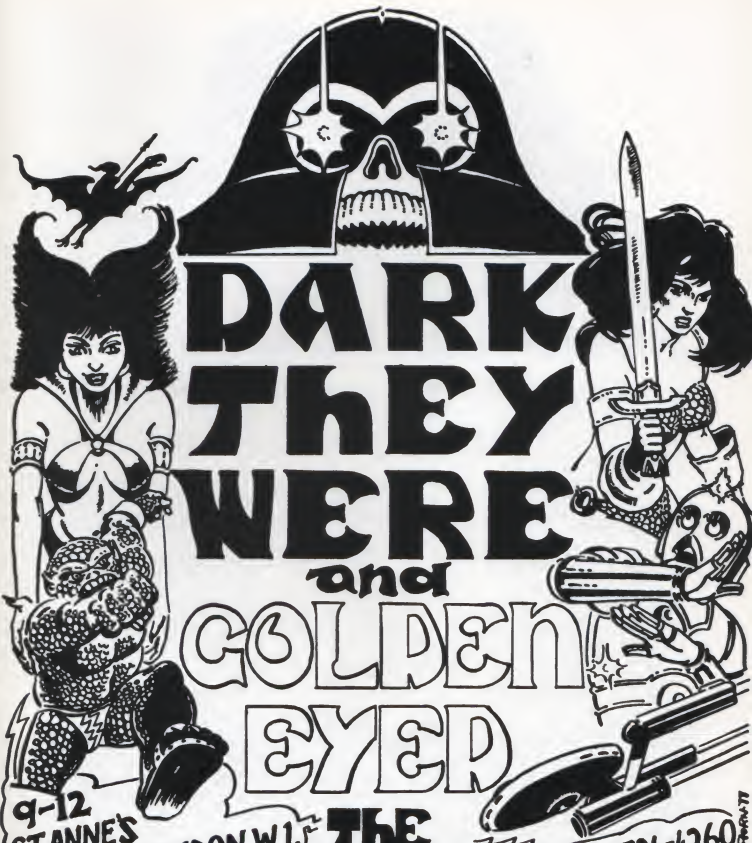
The aliens who emerge from the ship at the end were designed by Carlo Rambaldi, the Italian film technician responsible for the less than satisfactory 40 foot mechanical ape that appeared very briefly in *King Kong* (1977), but he's more successful this time. The alien "children" were relatively simple—being midgets in costume—but the adult alien who appears and smiles at the humans was much more complicated and took three months to build.

**The *Close Encounters* aliens were designed by Carlo Rambaldi, the man responsible for the less-than-satisfactory mechanical ape in *King Kong*.**

It was manipulated through a combination of mechanical and hydraulic gadgets and the famous smile was achieved via artificial tendons operated by remote control. "He doesn't have a wide range of expressions," said Rambaldi, "because probably very great advances in civilisation would gradually bring people to lose much of their emotional nature."

Stephen Spielberg himself actually takes the credit for conceiving the visual effects in *Close Encounters*. "I thought it was fair to take a 'concept' credit," he said, "because all the effects were designed and directed by myself and engineered and supervised by Doug Trumbull. That's the division of labour . . . the same with the other effects—they were my concepts on paper but my problem is that I can't even repair a toaster in my house."

Despite the brilliance of *Star Wars*, *Close Encounters* certainly represents the peak achievement in special effects to date . . . now all one can do is wait to see if *Superman* can possibly succeed in surpassing it.



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